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Linda Emily Fripps BEd (Hons), MA

X2926470

**Challenging Behaviour and Inclusion in a Secondary
School: perceptions, policies and practices**

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)

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Abstract

Challenging Behaviour and Inclusion in a Secondary School: perceptions, policies and practices

It has been widely reported in research and by the media that pupils' challenging behaviour causes concern amongst teachers, parents and politicians. Theories abound attributing indiscipline to factors related to the child, the family and, to a lesser degree, the school.

This study investigates the experiences and perceptions of pupils and staff regarding challenging behaviour and inclusion in a mainstream secondary school. The research seeks the views of pupils considered challenging by school authorities and also those of their teachers. It also elicits the opinions of pupils who are generally considered to be well-behaved and those of support staff, as their experience of behaviour in mainstream schools appears to be understudied within the existing literature.

The research took place at an all-ability Roman Catholic boys' school in a selective London Borough. The school has adopted measures to address challenging behaviour, including the use of punitive spaces such as the detention room and an inclusion unit. Within these spaces discipline is exercised and the implicit aim is to produce 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1977, p.138).

The study incorporates methods designed to facilitate students' involvement as participants and co-researchers. The research findings stress the importance of

relationships with peers, parents and teachers in children's behaviour. The notion of blame is also advanced. Each group blames others for indiscipline and generally absolves itself of responsibility for it. Children whose behaviour is seen as challenging are 'othered' by staff and students alike, who place limits on inclusion and advocate an exclusionary approach to addressing indiscipline.

In describing developments arising from the research, the study advocates listening to children and highlights the importance of collaborative working and consistency in developing and implementing whole school policy and inclusive practice relating to behaviour in school.

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My husband, John, and my sons, Liam, Sean, Ryan and Cianan, allowed me the time to pursue this study and did so patiently and encouragingly, and for this I am truly thankful. My love of learning was nurtured by my mother, Rita Rayner, and I appreciate her gift to me. I have endeavoured to share it with my sons and the students I work with.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Graham Fisher, for inspiring and challenging me to move out of my 'comfort zone'. Without him, I would have lacked the courage to explore such innovative ways of undertaking research.

Chapter One: Challenging Behaviour and Inclusion

Introduction

This study explores staff and pupil perceptions of challenging behaviour and inclusion in a mainstream secondary boys' school. It contributes to an existing body of literature that analyses the issue of behaviour in school. Previous work illustrates the idea that unease about pupils' behaviour is an ongoing concern (Sanders and Hendry, 1997; Tattum, 1986). Varma (1993) goes as far as to suggest that the problem of behaviour in school:

'... is as old as education itself and is never far from teachers' minds' (p.xi).

Concerns about behaviour extend beyond the school gates to the general public and the government, as the media regularly report on the financial and social costs of disruptive behaviour in schools (Daniels *et al.*, 1999); indeed, the last government identified behaviour as a key issue in its drive to improve the quality of education (DfES, 2004a). This view is shared by others, including school staff and educational psychologists, and is seen as a significant factor in a school's ability to raise standards (Axup and Gersch, 2008). Although indiscipline is officially reported to be a significant problem in just a small minority of schools (Ofsted, 2005), other authorities consider it a pressing issue as anxieties about the increasing prevalence of challenging behaviour in schools are voiced (Evans, 1999; Lines, 2003; Araújo, 2005; Axup and Gersch, 2008; McCluskey, 2008).

This research was conducted whilst the Labour party was in government and therefore reflects this period in its reference to official discourses. The political landscape has since changed with the advent of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition following the general election in May 2010. However, the rhetoric emanating from the coalition government in the early days of office appears to echo views expressed latterly by the previous administration. The Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, announced that:

‘Our Education and Children’s Bill in the autumn will put heads and teachers back in control, giving them a range of new powers to deal with ... the most disruptive pupils’ (Gove, 2010a).

He also proclaimed:

‘We’ve got great teachers ... Unless there’s good discipline teachers can’t teach’ (Gove, 2010b).

The school where this study was conducted is a boys’ Roman Catholic voluntary aided school in a South East London selective borough. It had eight hundred and fifty pupils on roll, aged between eleven and sixteen years. There were forty eight teachers, including the senior leadership team (SLT). The school employed a range of support staff comprising eight teaching assistants, pastoral support staff including five learning mentors, two of whom were also cover supervisors, as well as administrative, catering, cleaning and premises personnel. There has been historically a low turnover of staff across the teaching and support sectors.

RAISEonline data for 2008 provided information about the basic characteristics of the school, giving key indicators which enabled it to be compared with the national picture for maintained schools. This data analysis placed the school in the second lowest quintile for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, as well as for the stability of the pupil population. It was in the middle quintile for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), including those with statements, but in the top quintile both for pupils with statements of SEN and for pupils from minority ethnic groups. Finally, the school was in the second highest quintile for pupils whose first language is not, or believed not to be, English, as well as for its deprivation factor.

My own position in this school has changed during the course of the research. When I embarked on the Doctorate programme I was the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), and prior to that I had been the school's behavioural support teacher. During the first year of the project I was promoted to the post of Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for inclusion, and two years later I became Deputy Headteacher, with learning as my area of responsibility. Both of these senior leadership roles continued to incorporate the role of SENCo, although this ceased to be the case in April 2009.

Issues and rationale

The issue of pupil behaviour and how the school responds to it became the focus of my study as a result of concerns I had about policy and practice. These anxieties reflected salient points I had read in the literature around inclusion. For example, Evans and Lunt's (2002) study of the views of a range of professionals

from education, social services and health services regarding inclusion revealed that:

‘There was unanimity among the respondents that the most difficult children to include in mainstream schools were those with challenging behaviour’ (p.8).

This standpoint echoes others’ opinions, as reported by Poulou and Norwich (2002):

‘... a review of international studies reveals that children with EBD add to teachers’ concerns and threaten their teaching authority. Dealing with children with EBD is considered to be a frustrating task for teachers and can generate feelings of helplessness and incompetence’ (p.112).

Just prior to and during the period of this research, the school implemented a wide range of initiatives relating directly or indirectly to the issue of pupils’ challenging behaviour and the development of the school’s commitment to inclusion under the leadership of the headteacher, following his appointment in June 2004. These initiatives included the introduction of a comprehensive teaching and learning policy, an inclusion policy, a major review of the behaviour policy, the introduction of assertive discipline, remodelling the workforce, broadening the curriculum offer for Key Stage Four students, introducing the role of Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for inclusion and, subsequently, Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for learning, as well as the setting up of an inclusion unit and an internal exclusion room.

Such a profound set of changes clearly was destined to have a great impact on the running of the school. As these initiatives bedded in, I became aware of discrepancies between the stated intentions and the actual experience of these new policies and practices, particularly those associated with inclusion and responding to challenging behaviour. I was troubled by the experiences of a small group of students who seemed to have graduated through all the strategies the school offered to address challenging behaviour and yet who continued to cause concern. Their long term placement in the school's inclusion centre did not result in successful reintegration, but ultimately in their leaving the school. These experiences led me to query the school's professed inclusive nature.

I hoped my study would provide answers to some pertinent questions. What is life like on a daily basis for children who are considered to be challenging by school authorities? What do pupils and staff think about the inclusion of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour in mainstream classrooms? How do pupils and staff think challenging behaviour should be addressed? My research has set out to elicit the views of pupils and staff, both teaching and support, on these key issues as they have first-hand experience of them.

I wanted the insights gained from my study to provide the impetus for the school to improve the way it approaches the issue of challenging behaviour so that it becomes more genuinely inclusive in its response to pupils whose behaviour causes concern, rather than marginalising them. I also wanted the research to contribute to the existing literature on challenging behaviour and inclusion to enable other practitioners to develop policy and practice that enhances schools'

capabilities to cater more effectively for children whose behaviour currently renders them prone to exclusion.

The issue of challenging behaviour in schools highlights a range of dilemmas that faced the former government's commitment to inclusion. The Labour Party stated that:

'Education is central to Labour's mission to deliver social justice and equality of opportunity' (Labour Party, 2005, p.1).

The government advocated the desirability of inclusive education and yet there was no official definition of this term in the United Kingdom, despite its use in government documents (Sheehy *et al.*, 2005). Similarly, 'challenging behaviour' is not a definitive term, but is dependent upon context, expectations and perceptions (Ofsted, 2005). This study seeks to add to the literature that contributes to an understanding of these terms.

The *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004b) agenda has strengthened the need to develop inclusive education by placing it at the heart of mechanisms for assessing, via Ofsted inspection criteria, the effectiveness of schools in contributing to children:

'Being healthy

Staying safe

Enjoying and achieving

Making a positive contribution

Economic well-being' (DfES, 2003, p.7).

The Children Act 2004 emphasises the belief that *every* child matters, not *most* children, and not *all* children *provided* they conform to certain criteria. Thus, it has afforded a public arena for considering the plight of children whose behaviour is deemed challenging.

The study

Initially, my study was conceived upon 'safe lines' as it reflected paradigms and methods I was familiar with following my inquiries at Masters level. However, after receiving feedback from the assessors of my initial study, I began to rethink my approach in light of ethical issues relating to identifying pupils as participants in a project focusing on challenging behaviour and also my role as researcher, given my position as a member of the SLT within the school. The process that ensued led me to move out of my comfort zone to areas that have been far more challenging and exciting.

Accordingly, pupil participants in the main study included both students whose behaviour had been deemed by school authorities to warrant serious sanction, namely internal exclusion, and also students who were considered to be generally well-behaved. This resulted in a positive move away from the problems associated with labelling and possible further stigmatisation highlighted in response to my initial study, which focused solely on pupils identified by school staff as presenting challenging behaviour.

Moreover, the assessors recommended that I pursue a more emancipatory approach to my research. This suggestion prompted further delving into the

literature and this led me to participatory research. Whilst investigating this area, I discovered the work of Dr Diana Rose (1998, 2001) and her innovative research method, User Focused Monitoring. This led to my researching literature on children as researchers, which helped me to resolve some of the ethical issues related to my position of authority in the school.

The theoretical framework of 'children as researchers' prompted the development of *choice* in this research. Pupils *chose* whether to be co-researchers as well as participants, they *chose* how to be involved in the research and *they* set the parameters regarding the extent of their involvement. This was achieved by the participants choosing the data collection methods they wished to employ in order to share their views. Working with pupils as co-researchers is an effective and powerful way of hearing 'student voice'. This model stimulates collaborative working and reflection between students and staff and has the potential to initiate change in schools (Fielding, 2004). Consequently, my approach evolved over the course of the study. My 'emergent methodology' had moved from traditional paradigms to a course of action which was far more fluid and developmental, but which I hoped would be better able to illuminate the complex mechanisms involved. 'My' study became 'our' study. These issues will be discussed at greater length in the literature review (Chapter Two) and the methodology section (Chapter Three).

Further, I found that my understanding of myself as 'researcher' had developed as this work progressed. The assessors of my initial study helped me on this journey of self-discovery through their suggestion that I explore the concept of multiple identities. As a consequence of this advice, I explored related literature and

discovered the work of Blumenthal (1999) and her hypothesis, the 'divided self'. This concept has helped me understand both participants' and my own responses to issues explored in this research. It has assisted me in my attempts to unravel the complexities that have arisen during the course of the study. In addition, it has helped me to come to terms with various feelings I have experienced whilst undertaking this project. For example, I felt disgruntled, at first, in response to feedback I received from the assessors of my initial study. My role as an authority figure seemed to assume far greater relevance for them than it did for me at the time. I felt that I had a very good rapport with pupils and this enabled them to be open with me, as was evident in the rich data gathered during my initial study. Consequently, I felt that the assessors were bound by their own assumptions and I believed that this was apparent in their remarks about my position within the school. I thought that they *assumed* that pupils were deferential to higher-ranking staff, but I know from experience that this is not always the case and that some pupils will defy, be disrespectful and even abusive to senior teachers.

The notion of the 'divided self' enabled me to understand the intense emotion I felt when engaged in the final meeting about one of our pupils on what turned out to be his last day at the school. I had met with the boy's mother before, but this was the first time I had met his father. The father listened quietly and attentively to the catalogue of misdemeanours his son had been involved in. During the recounting of an incident that had occurred a couple of days earlier, in which his son, along with six other boys, had confronted a large crowd of pupils from a neighbouring school, the father politely interrupted me and informed me that today would be the last day his son attended the school. As we were exchanging farewells, the mother grabbed me and hugged me, crying and thanking me for trying to help her son. It

was as much as I could do to fight back my own tears. The father had intended to take his son with him there and then, but the child asked if he could remain until the end of the day to enable him to say his farewells and his father had agreed. I went to see the young man in the afternoon to say goodbye and wish him well and he was warm and friendly in return.

I felt deeply saddened by these events and emotionally drained. However, I was aware that other members of staff were pleased with the outcome as previous attempts by another member of SLT to engineer a managed move had failed and the headteacher was reluctant to permanently exclude him, although it was generally felt that this sanction was the only recourse left. Having reflected upon these events, I realised that my divided self had been at work. As a teacher, SENCo and an advocate of inclusion, I wanted to be able to keep this child in school. As a senior leader, I appreciated how his leaving made life easier for staff. As a mother I sympathised and empathised with him and his parents.

The research questions

The research questions for this study were posed as a result of a number of influences. Firstly, it appeared that pupils were concerned about the issue of behaviour and its impact. The school's most recent Ofsted inspection report (Evans, 2007) states:

‘Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good. Students are critical of the few who occasionally stop them learning in lessons’ (p.5).

Secondly, the questions reflect the interests of the pupils who participated in the study as co-researchers and the areas they wanted to investigate. Thirdly, the questions also express my concerns following my experiences and observations. In addition, they relate to issues evident in my examination of literature on behaviour and inclusion, as presented in Chapter Two.

Having witnessed the school's inability to meet the needs of the small group of pupils described earlier, I wanted to establish how pupils and staff perceive challenging behaviour and inclusion. I was aware that previous studies had elicited the views of pupils deemed to have experienced difficulties because of their behaviour, as well as the views of teachers. However, I understood that the views of pupils in general and those of support staff, particularly those working beyond the classroom such as caretakers, cleaners and catering staff, had been understudied, if studied at all. I was conscious that these staff also encountered pupil behaviour that was considered to be challenging. One incident that springs to mind involved a year eleven student who refused to leave the school site having been told to go home, despite the fact that he had been told to do so by his head of year, a deputy headteacher and the head teacher. Finally, the caretaker was asked by the head to speak to the boy, and he did. The pupil agreed to leave for him, whilst making it quite clear he was not prepared to move for senior staff. On another occasion, the same student was rude to catering staff and the report subsequently compiled outlined his abuse towards them. It includes his initial refusal to pick up rubbish he had thrown on the floor and his shouting:

'It's their fucking job cos they're nobodies'.

[All data extracts throughout this work are presented in bold typeface and are reported verbatim with original language, spelling, grammar and punctuation.]

These two stories demonstrate that support staff have pertinent experience that is also worth researching.

It transpired in discussions that the pupil co-researchers were concerned about behaviour. One year eleven student summed this up by saying:

‘How do students and staff feel about behaviour in this school? What can be done about bad behaviour in this school?’

Consequently, the first research question is:

- What are the perceptions of the school community with regard to challenging behaviour and inclusion?

The pupil co-researchers expressed their interest in finding out about the actual experiences of pupils in relation to behaviour. One year ten pupil asked:

‘What is good behaviour? What is bad behaviour? What makes people behave like they do?’

Another year ten pupil commented:

‘We would like to know what kids’ behaviour is like within [name of school]. Does the behaviour vary through year groups?’

Following our discussions, the second research question was agreed:

- What is the daily reality of school life for marginalised pupils?

I originally used the term ‘marginalised pupils’ to describe the group of children who were to be the focus of this study, pupils the school perceived as frequently displaying challenging behaviour. I was aware that this conceptualisation is shared by others:

'... there is a growing recognition in the UK that less able and non-conforming individuals are in danger of becoming more and more marginalized in a system built on the operation of market forces ... Although a range of outcome measures is used in quality assurance, the key indicator of effective schooling is widely regarded to be exam performance and the key impediments to a school's success are seen as the unsuccessful pupils and the disaffected' (Lloyd-Smith and Tarr, 2000, p.59).

When I embarked on this project I felt that the school operated a myriad of systems that relegated non-conforming pupils to the margins of the school as these pupils were moved out from mainstream activity in classrooms and 'dealt with' by their Year Learning Coordinators (YLCs), formerly known as Heads of Year, or members of the senior leadership team rather than their own subject teachers. Pupils could be kept in isolation under the supervision of their YLC, sent to the referral room, placed in the school's inclusion unit, referred to the borough's Pupil Referral Unit and excluded from school either on a fixed term basis or permanently. All these measures represent 'dividing practices' (Foucault, 1982, p.777).

Thus our education system has a range of alternative provisions for pupils removed from mainstream classes because of concerns about their behaviour. Some, such as inclusion centres, operate within mainstream schools, whilst others, such as Pupil Referral Units, function outside them.

My main study widened the scope of pupils to include a broad range of children in terms of age, academic ability and the perceptions staff hold of them in relation to behaviour. However, I have retained the term 'marginalised' given that pupils are, by virtue of their numbers in relation to others within the school environment, the majority stakeholders and yet their views tend to be marginalised (McCluskey, 2008).

My own experiences and observations prompted me to pose the third question:

- How compatible are school policies and practices with the inclusion of marginalised pupils?

I was aware that others had found discrepancies between school policies and what can happen in the day-to-day life of a school (Turner, 2003). Turner raises an issue that is pertinent to this study. Although her article focuses on her school's behaviour policy, and I wish to look at a wider range of policies, she highlights:

'... the risks of failing to involve all staff and pupils in the development of a behaviour policy, and the inconsistencies in practice that arise when those using the policy have no ownership of the document' (p.7).

I believe that the point Turner makes is relevant to how schools respond to pupils whose behaviour they find challenging. With this in mind, the fourth and final research question is:

- What are the implications of the findings for the development of a collaborative, whole school approach to the inclusion of marginalised pupils?

This question, I believe, resonates with the spirit of the *Every Child Matters* agenda. It embraces the notion of student voice and I hope it will help to make these principles become a sustained and consistent reality in the school.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction: situating the research

The issue of behaviour in schools has long attracted the interest of academics and a wide range of literature on the subject exists. This research seeks to create a dialogue and lead to a better understanding of the way behaviour appears to those who participate in the daily life of a secondary school, in the belief that the insights gained might lead to improvements (Barritt, 1986). It questions the tendency to label pupils 'disruptive' or as having 'behaviour difficulties'. Such descriptions 'other' children by constructing their identities predominantly in negative terms in relation to their behaviour. The ways in which these students are similar to their peers can become ignored. This position recognises that children whose behaviour causes concern for other people have 'real and complex lives' (Lloyd and O'Regan, 2000, p.49) and that they make mistakes like everyone else (Lister, 1996). Focusing on their 'deviant identity' (Allan, 2008, p.114) carries the danger of 'othering' children as a result of perceiving them as very different to 'normal', well-behaved children (Walkerdine, 1999) and ignoring the fact that they share aspirations and experiences in common with other young people (Lloyd and O'Regan, 2000; Brown, 2005).

Previous studies have taken place in mainstream schools identified as experiencing difficulties, such as those catering for populations notably disadvantaged in terms of socio-economic factors (Verkuyten, 2002; Araújo, 2005; Lyons and O'Connor, 2006), having many pupils with special educational needs (Turner, 2003; Luiselli *et al*, 2005) or emanating from differing ethnic backgrounds

(Verkuyten, 2002; Araújo, 2005; Luiselli *et al*, 2005). Furthermore, they have tended to be schools where discipline, pupil achievement and staff morale, as a result of challenging pupil behaviour, are perceived as significant concerns (Araújo, 2005; Luiselli *et al*, 2005; Axup and Gersch, 2008).

This study investigates perceptions of behaviour in a school that is not failing or in markedly demanding circumstances. It has been recognised as the most successful non-selective school catering for boys in the borough in light of the GCSE results for 2008, and was judged as satisfactory with good features following its last Ofsted inspection in September 2007.

This investigation seeks the views of a variety of groups within the school community. Some studies have focused on a singular set of participants: teachers (Evans, 1999; Axup and Gersch, 2008; Poulou and Norwich, 2002; Turner and Waterhouse, 2003; Head *et al.*, 2003) and pupils identified as presenting challenging behaviour (Macleod, 2006; Pomeroy, 1999; Munn and Lloyd, 2005). Others have sought the views of both staff and pupils (Araújo, 2005; Turner, 2003; Ravet, 2007; Verkuyten, 2002; Lyons and O'Connor, 2006). This study also elicits the perspectives of staff and pupils, but differs from previous work in significant ways. Whilst it has drawn upon the views of pupils whose behaviour school authorities consider to be challenging, and of their teachers; it also includes understudied groups (Creswell, 2007), namely support staff and pupils who are generally considered to conform to the expectations of school discipline practices.

Not only does this research gather the perceptions of a larger number of support staff than earlier studies, it also includes a greater range, such as teaching

assistants, learning mentors, ancillary and domestic staff and also a broader spectrum of students than has tended to be the case previously. The entire age, ability and behaviour ranges of the student body are represented, because as Kutnick and Manson (1998) observe:

'Children who deviate from the expected norms of behaviour within the social system in which they participate (in the main, the school classroom) are the subjects of study ... Within the literature, scant attention is paid to what constitutes normalcy, either in terms of its description or its development; it is taken for granted' (p.167).

I had originally intended to include parents and governors in the study, but decided against this as parents and the majority of the governors experience the school second-hand through the reports they receive from others, namely pupils and staff. A small number of staff are also governors of the school and have contributed to this research in their dual role. Moreover, the students who participated in this project as co-researchers wanted to elicit the views of pupils and staff and did not express a desire to extend the research to parties beyond these two groups. The issue of potential data overload was also a factor in this decision.

The following exposition examines issues pertinent to the research questions. It is divided into two sections. 'Challenging Behaviour, Marginalisation and Inclusion' discusses the complexity of defining and understanding concepts of challenging behaviour and inclusion, and the lack of consensus about the meaning and implications of these terms. 'Approaches to Investigating and Addressing the

Issues' deals with the development of techniques which attempt to place students themselves at the heart of the research process.

Challenging Behaviour, Marginalisation and Inclusion

Concern about behaviour

'The popular view that disorder in schools, like disorder in society, is a recent phenomenon is easily contradicted by reference to historical sources' (McManus, 1995, p.1-2).

Concerns about pupil indiscipline show no signs of abating. If anything, recent literature suggests that teachers perceive it to be on the increase (Evans, 1999; Lines, 2003; Axup and Gersch, 2008). The evidence for this arises from small-scale studies based on the experiences and perceptions of thirty-six teachers in Evans' research and nine teachers in Axup and Gersch's work, whilst Lines' paper offers an anecdotal account of the initiatives taken by his school to address increases in the incidence of challenging behaviour. However, the limited nature of this qualitative evidence perhaps weakens the credibility of the claim.

Ofsted (2005) reports that in 68% of the secondary schools it inspected in 2003/2004 behaviour was judged good or better. However, it notes that:

‘... the proportion of secondary schools in which behaviour overall has been judged good or better has declined since 1996/97 from over three quarters to over two thirds. Over the same period, the proportion where behaviour is unsatisfactory, at just under one in ten schools, has not reduced’ (p.5).

Ofsted (2005) confirms the findings of the Elton Report (DES, 1989) by agreeing that low-level disruption of lessons is the most common form of poor behaviour. It acknowledges that the cumulative effect of such behaviour can be frustrating and stressful for teachers and pupils, despite the fact that teachers tend to deal with it effectively.

The literature highlights the unprecedented rise in the numbers of pupils permanently excluded from schools in England during the 1990s (Parsons, 1999; Hallam and Castle, 2001; Hallam and Rogers, 2008). Significant changes in education following the 1988 Education Reform Act contributed to this dramatic increase. The Act introduced the publication of league tables and extended parental choice with the result that schools were under pressure to raise standards and were in competition with each other. Education became a quasi-market continually scrutinised by Ofsted, the government and the media. In this context some pupils were considered more desirable (Glennister, 1991), whilst others less so, given the fact that they were at risk of exclusion or poor attainment and compromised schools’ positions in the league tables (Wright *et al.*, 2000).

Many authors agree that exclusion figures are unreliable and posit various reasons for this conclusion. Hallam and Rogers (2008) contest the consistency of schools in their approach to excluding students and therefore query the validity of data on exclusions:

‘... data are unreliable as schools vary in the extent to which they exclude pupils, even for the same kinds of behaviour’
(p.9).

My experience in one school confirms this claim as I have observed inconsistency regarding exclusions under the leadership of three headteachers. Even within the tenure of one headteacher, I have observed deviation regarding the use of exclusion as a response to the Local Authority’s concern about the school’s inflated exclusion figures compared to other schools in the borough. The headteacher implemented the practice of internal exclusions in order to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions. The pattern of pupil misbehaviour did not change, but the school’s sanctioning of it did.

I appreciate the sentiment in Hayden’s (2003) observation that:

‘Exclusion from school is seen as indicative of behaviour that teachers find unacceptable within school, as such it represents their limits to tolerance’ (p.626).

However, I remain convinced that ‘limits to tolerance’ can be extended when it is expedient to do so.

Defining challenging behaviour and inclusion

The issue of the terminology used to describe pupils' behaviour is significant because, as Tattum (1989) explains, through the descriptors used:

'... we are engaging profound philosophical distinctions which will have fundamental implications for our attitudes towards disruptive pupils and how we tackle the problem in our schools' (p.144).

Understanding challenging behaviour and inclusion lies at the heart of this study, but what do these terms mean? There is no simple answer to this question. The literature relating to these two concepts makes it clear that definitions are hard to come by.

Authors agree that numerous terms have been used over time to describe behaviour that causes concern in schools (Daniels *et al.*, 1999; Meo and Parker, 2004; Wolfendale and Bryans, 1994). Wolfendale and Bryans claim that 'challenging behaviour' is one of the most recent labels used. Ofsted (2005) found that there is limited consensus within schools regarding the meaning of challenging behaviour and also a lack of consistency in the use of terms to describe it. It concludes:

'Perception of challenging behaviour is relative and conditioned both by the context in which the behaviour occurs and by the observer's expectations' (p.6).

Ofsted qualifies this statement by proposing that there is general agreement that two types of behaviour are challenging, regardless of individual situations. The first is overtly aggressive behaviour including physical actions such as assaulting people or throwing furniture. The second is aggression that is predominantly verbal in nature such as streams of abuse, the invasion of personal space with the intention of being threatening and the failure to follow instructions as an expression of defying teachers' authority.

Specifying the meaning of inclusion presents similar problems. There is consensus amongst writers on this subject that a universally accepted definition does not exist. Having acknowledged this, many offer their own understanding of this term as a definition. This further complicates the issue of agreeing a shared meaning as their understandings may reflect their own beliefs. However, Rose's (2010) position presents an alternative perspective on understanding inclusion:

'It has become clear that seeking a simple definition of inclusion which can be superimposed on a broad range of educational institutions and within diverse societies is unlikely to achieve the desired result of challenging exclusion.' (p.295).

Sheehy *et al.* (2005) noted that the word 'inclusion' features in documents issued by the Labour government and yet there was no formal, authorised definition of it in Great Britain. In addition, there was a lack of clarity regarding the children to whom it relates. In its publication, *Inclusive Schooling* (DfES 2001b), the former government focused on pupils with special needs. Others contest such a narrow

conceptualisation and argue that inclusion within education is about all children (Mittler, 2000; CSIE, 2002).

Ambivalence regarding inclusion is also evident in the recently formed Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition's programme for government, as it pledges to:

'... prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools, and remove the bias towards inclusion ... ensure that all new Academies follow an inclusive admissions policy' (HM Government, 2010, p.29).

Many authors agree that inclusion extends beyond education and refers to society generally (Booth *et al.*, 2000; Mittler, 2000; Skidmore, 2004; Ainscow *et al.*, 2006).

However inclusion is defined, there are concerns regarding its extension to students whose behaviour is considered to be problematic either as a result of them being formally identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties or viewed as:

'... simply disruptive or naughty' (DfE, 1994, p.7, para.1).

These children continue to be marginalised despite the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2001a) recommending that all reasonable steps should be taken to enable pupils with statements of special educational needs for emotional and behavioural difficulties to be educated in mainstream schools.

Many authorities have noted that pupils whose behaviour is seen as compromising a school's performance or other pupils' education are unwanted in mainstream

schools (Stirling, 1992; Visser and Stokes, 2003; Hallam and Rogers, 2008). The position these children find themselves in contrasts with the situation of other pupils with special educational needs. Having reviewed the literature on teachers' attitudes towards integration and inclusion, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) conclude:

'... teachers, although positive towards the general philosophy of inclusive education, do not share a "total inclusion" approach to special educational provision. Instead, they hold differing attitudes about school placements, based largely upon the nature of the students' disabilities ... in the case of the more severe learning needs and behavioural difficulties, teachers hold negative attitudes to the implementation of inclusion' (p.142).

Many writers agree upon the importance of teachers' attitudes in making inclusion work (Avramidis *et al.*, 2000; Visser *et al.*, 2002; Grieve, 2009).

Given the lack of clarity and agreement regarding the meanings of challenging behaviour and inclusion, this study seeks to investigate the perceptions of the school community regarding them.

Competing discourses

Reviewing the literature on challenging behaviour revealed that an array of competing discourses regarding its causes and approaches to managing its manifestation in schools. I realised that I would have to select material from the

wealth of information available and that raised issues regarding the basis upon which I would make my selection. I am conscious of the fact that I have opted for material that made an impact on me, and consequently my selection reflects this. Other researchers could, and probably would, have selected alternative sources from the many available upon which to base their review of the literature.

So why did I choose as I did? My initial thoughts about the literature review suggested that I engage in a thorough, systematic and impartial search and critique of the literature on the issue of student behaviour. Through my ongoing process of reflexivity I began to recognise that I was drawn to, and on many occasions excited by, particular articles and authors. Upon further reflection, I understood the reasons for this: these materials connected with me because they promoted beliefs and values I hold.

I also became aware that my interaction with material could be mixed as I analysed my response to Parsons' (2005) work. I was initially attracted by his exposition regarding the legal and penal frameworks in relation to young people and how these contribute to the constructions of them as 'bad' (Macleod, 2006). However, further reflection led me to question his portrayal of young people in trouble as 'sad' (Macleod, 2006) and thus denying them agency. By agency, I mean the ability to take actions in order to decide outcomes. In highlighting structural inequalities, Parsons appears to deny people the ability to take action to effect change in their circumstances. Consequently, they could be seen as weak, powerless victims.

I pondered the reasons why I had experienced such strong reactions to this line of argument. It dawned on me I had not responded to it simply on an intellectual level. On an emotional level I had reacted against his argument and this recoil had emanated from my identity as a child of a single mother. From this vantage point I reacted against being typecast as 'sad'. As a school pupil I had received free school meals, an indicator that today would have marked me as disadvantaged. These factors played a significant part in my interaction with the literature and I have come to appreciate that I am inextricably bound up in every aspect of the research. It would appear that I am not alone in experiencing this. I immediately related to Conteh's (2005) work. Her discussions about:

'The impossibility of objectivity' (p.7)

rang a chord with me, as did her revelation that:

'My personal and professional selves were about to take on new subjectivities as researcher' (p.17).

One of my first priorities in writing my literature review was to avoid the 'catalogue approach' that I was cautioned against at my first residential weekend with the Open University. This, I feel, I have done. Rather than providing a 'whistle stop tour' of the extensive literature pertinent to student behaviour, I have framed my review around key texts that I think give an insight into the broad range of materials on this topic. These key texts also happen to be the ones that I became absorbed by.

Two themes, blame and deficit, emerged from the literature I reviewed and these helped me to make sense of the various perspectives I read about. Whilst authors

agree that notions of blame and deficit lie at the heart of discourses about challenging behaviour, they disagree on who or what should be blamed, as well as who or what is deficit in this matter.

Having explored the literature I conceived of an analogy that conceptualised blame and deficit as two sides of a coin that is tossed into deep waters. The coin hitting the surface causes ripples to radiate out from the point of contact. The ripples represent the various parties seen as deficient and to blame for indiscipline by others: the child, the child's family, the child's community, the classroom teacher, the school and wider society including the government and the media. Each ripple can be scrutinised individually or can be viewed as part of a ripple effect so that each component affects other parts of the configuration.

As I surveyed the various arguments put forward to explain children's problematic behaviour, I wondered why the notion of blame tended to permeate them. Ogilvy (1994) threw light on this:

'The problem with the causation debate has lain in the dogged quest for single causes, which results in the blame being switched from the child to the home to the school' (p.197).

Parsons (2005) elaborates on this theme and argues that perspectives on pupil disaffection reflect policy decisions. These, in turn, reflect local and national government decision-making, as well as deeply embedded cultural stances, relating to the inclination to fund strategies aimed at preventing or punishing

wrong-doing. Furthermore, issues connected with identifying who or what is to blame are also pertinent in this arena. Parsons observes:

‘The placing of blame is a most important step in making decisions, allocating resources and generating policy to relate to and manage these young people’ (p.188).

One of the features of the discourses that I have identified which I find striking is the tendency of proponents to offer reductionist frameworks for understanding behaviour. Some discourses present the causes of challenging behaviour in schools as located ‘outside the walls’ (Watkins and Wagner, 2000), that is to say, beyond the confines of school, deriving from family backgrounds and the communities children are part of. Others cite factors related to ‘within-child’ (Galloway *et al.*, 1994). Such factors are portrayed as deficit and blame is attached to them; consequently they are viewed as culpable for children’s indiscipline. As a result of this blame culture, other parties are conceptualised as victims, notably teachers and conforming pupils, as well as society at large. Other discourses attribute responsibility ‘inside the walls’, identifying teachers and schools as accountable for behaviour.

Another strand is also evident in the literature and is anti-reductionist. Discourses within this category advocate understanding behavioural difficulties in a more holistic way by considering the child’s family circumstances and school context and this approach is generally described as the ecosystemic approach (Farrell, 1995; McNamara and Moreton, 1995). Each of these approaches to understanding behaviour issues will now be considered.

‘Within-child’ and ‘outside the walls’

An overlap between ‘within-child’ and ‘outside the walls’ explanations of student misbehaviour is evident in the literature, as well as discourses that address them separately. There is agreement regarding the longstanding potency of ‘within-child’ accounts of pupil problem behaviour. Martin and Hayes (1998) exemplify this trend:

‘Historically, pupils have been the focus of attempts to understand behavioural difficulties, as many schools perceive them as *being* or *having* the problem’ (p.135).

Macleod’s (2006) work encapsulates the prevalence of ‘within-child’ and ‘outside the walls’ explanations for youth misbehaviour. She contends that adults’ views of children and adolescents as *bad*, *sad* or *mad* are the result of what they perceive to be the cause of troubling behaviour. Consequently, some perspectives attribute blame for misbehaviour on individual deficits and constructs young people as *bad*. Other perspectives blame structural inequalities which result in disadvantage and deprivation for individuals, families and communities. These perspectives present people as ‘victims’ and ‘*sad*’, and as such, worthy of sympathy and support.

She argues that a third perspective is gaining popularity; one that necessitates the medicalisation of troubling behaviour, and in the process construes people as ill, or ‘*mad*’. This discourse absolves people from blame. However, previous literature as exemplified by Martin and Hayes (1998) and Visser and Rayner (1999), notes the longstanding credentials of the psycho-medical model of understanding troubling behaviour and whereas terminology used to describe the behaviour and treatment

for it may change, the practice of addressing it medically has enjoyed enduring popularity.

The works of Araújo (2005), Evans (1999), Parsons (2005) and Corbett (1996) illustrate Macleod's conceptualisation. Araújo's consideration of key government documents focuses on disentangling conceptions of indiscipline proposed by official discourses and she concludes:

'... a deficit approach to the communities and families of certain social and ethnic backgrounds features prominently in official discourses' (2005, p.247).

She also maintains that the views of the teachers who participated in her research reflect official discourses on indiscipline in school. Her findings endorse an earlier study conducted by Evans (1999) which found that:

'As a whole group, the staff sample believed more strongly in external causes of disruptive behaviour than internal' (p.33).

Araújo focuses mainly on structural issues and neglects to consider pupils' individual agency in misbehaviour, despite pupils telling her that they:

'... misbehaved, played truant and got involved in fights' (2005, p.258).

Parsons (2005) considers the systems at work within the British establishment that promote and perpetuate negative constructions of children whose behaviour is perceived as challenging. Parsons offers an alternative portrayal of these children

which appears to present young people in trouble as 'sad' (Macleod, 2006).

Parsons maintains:

'The child did not choose this neighbourhood, these parents and usually even the school, and it is sociologically and morally interesting to ask who bears the responsibility/blame for deficient and damaging features in these arenas' (p.188).

Both Araújo (2005) and Parsons (1999) suggest that laying the blame on children and their families denies any causes at policy or institutional levels. They argue that the home is presented as responsible for a child's indiscipline. Not only does this discourse attribute children's misbehaviour to poor parenting, it also advocates punishment for parents rather than support.

Slee (1995) suggests that the shifting of the problem of indiscipline onto pupils and their families appeals to policy-makers, schools and teachers because of its implicit promotion of simplistic, easily and quickly resolved measures that focus on intervention with pupils rather than highlighting the need to address school organisational, pedagogical or curricular issues. However, identifying pupils as having special educational needs is problematic:

'As professionals working in special education, it should perhaps be remembered that we do not observe dysfunctional behaviour: rather we observe behaviour that we label as dysfunctional, on the basis of a set of values which we apply in a professional capacity (and which may

not be shared by others in our field)' (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007, p.39).

Furthermore, even if children whose behaviour is deemed as troublesome are identified as having special needs, they are still viewed negatively. Corbett (1996) argues that they are rendered subject to 'bad-mouthing'. She discusses how the term 'special needs' is becoming a designation that is deemed unacceptable, and so it has been expanded to include the word 'educational'. Corbett argues that by doing this, the process of distinguishing some 'needs' as 'special' is justified, because they are specific to the realm of education and not generalised into the wider community. However, I would contend that this is not the case with pupils who are identified as having special needs by being labelled SEBD as they are often presented as a threat to wider society. For example, official discourses, as presented in a range of documents produced by the government, express concern about pupils who are considered to display SEBD, whilst at the same time voicing broader social concerns (Labour Party, 1997; DfEE, 1997; DfEE, 1999; DfES, 2002):

'Wasted potential brings high personal, social and economic costs. For young people themselves the price of disengagement from learning now is often serious problems and persistent failure for the rest of their lives. Low motivation, truancy, behaviour problems and exclusion damage our communities and burden our economy' (DfES, 2002, p.1).

The motivation for supporting these pupils is as much, if not more, for the benefit of society as for the children themselves. Therefore, children whose behaviour is a concern for school authorities are doubly 'bad-mouthed'; firstly, as having special educational needs and secondly, as being a threat to the well-being of others, particularly teachers and other pupils (Axup and Gersch, 2008; Araújo, 2005) as well as society as a whole.

Even within the arena of special educational needs, pupils with SEBD are marginalised and othered. Visser and Stokes (2003) observe:

'It would appear that whilst the right to inclusion in a mainstream school is seen as an ideal for pupils with cognitive, sensory or physical disabilities, for the pupils with EBD only the more basic right to an education is available, and there appears to be no compatible right to equality of provision ... for the pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties the right can justifiably be taken away, due to his or her special need' (p.171).

Pupils with SEBD may be denied a place in a mainstream school if it can be argued that their education in that context:

'... would be incompatible with the efficient education of other children' (DfES, 2001a, p.14).

They can also be deprived of a school place as a result of permanent exclusion. (DCSF, 2008).

How does this sit with the government's insistence that *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003)? The government has not withdrawn the right of headteachers to exclude pupils in the wake of *Every Child Matters*. Quite clearly, some children matter more than others and some pupils get what they or their families 'deserve'.

'Inside the walls'

Discourses are evident in the literature that attribute pupil misbehaviour to 'inside the walls' factors. Whilst there is agreement within this strand that schools can create indiscipline, there are differences in the emphasis given to the various ways they do so. Much of this literature arises from research into the experiences and views of students. Traditionally, such studies have focused on pupils who have been excluded from school or identified as having special educational needs relating to SEBD. There is a growing body of research, and our study contributes to it, that elicits the views of:

'... "included" pupils ... a generality of pupils' (McCluskey, 2008, p.447).

These two groups of students are categorised as 'disruptive' and 'disrupted' by official discourses (Araújo, 2005; McCluskey, 2008).

There is extensive consensus that teachers are to blame for pupil misbehaviour arising from studies undertaken with students in mainstream schools, as well as with pupils in specialist provision.

Three studies highlight the views of students who have been excluded from school and have continued their education in specialist provision. These pupils are critical of their mainstream schools and view their teachers negatively:

‘... pupils ... felt that they had been treated unfairly by the school ... just after I got back from exclusion, there was a lassie swearing and the teacher didnae bother but when I got caught I got chucked out’ (Munn and Lloyd, 2005, p.212).

‘... interviewees commented that their teachers should have been more strict than they were ... I think I need to have more strict teachers ... then I probably would have got on better at the school. Cause, like, I behaved for them’ (Pomeroy, 1999, p.472).

‘... many of the pupils held mainstream teachers responsible for their behaviour ...

Scott: They just want you out

Gale: They just want you out of mainstream?

Scott: Aye’ (Macleod, 2006, p.161).

Research conducted in mainstream schools in challenging or disadvantaged contexts also blames schools and teachers for indiscipline. Araújo (2005) observes:

‘Pupils ... saw disruption as being *produced* in the context of the classroom. In particular, poor quality of teaching was

seen as potentially providing the conditions in which
indiscipline would breed' (p.255).

Turner (2003) notes:

'Pupils said that the amount of trouble they get into in a
lesson is dependent on what the teacher is like' (p.11).

Verkuyten (2002) describes how students justify their behaviour and impose accountability on their teachers by defining disruptive behaviour in relation to schoolwork, claims about normality and by making use of common understandings of teachers' professional identity:

'He [teacher] just can't keep order. He's not got any
authority. Nobody listens to anything he says' (p.115).

Pupils in Lyons and O'Connor's (2006) study:

'... identified boredom as a factor in misbehaviour ...
described aspects of their learning environment that are
boring, specifically having to sit still and doing things that
are repetitive or not interesting' (p.224).

It is widely acknowledged that pupils cite boredom as a cause of classroom indiscipline. Students attribute their lack of interest to the delivery of lessons, criticising individual teachers for neglecting to explain work appropriately and for failing to engage and control them.

Turner's (2003) account of pupil perspectives on the part played by 'inside the walls' factors neglects to include direct quotations and one is left wondering if this

is the researcher's interpretation, as the pupil voice is not presented in its own right. The expositions offered by the authors of the three studies conducted in specialist settings, and the research studies carried out by Lyons and O'Connor, Araújo and Verkuyten, incorporate the testimonies of the children and consequently the message they convey is all the more powerful.

Turner also omits to include a sufficiently detailed report of her methods and fails to provide any explanation of how data were analysed. She acknowledges that she:

‘... anticipated problems related to subjectivity owing to individual teachers' interpretation of the policy according to their own values and beliefs’ (p.9).

However, she neglects to concede the possibility of her own subjectivity impacting on her research. Indeed, I was left with the impression that her bias towards pupils with SEBD resulted in her dismissal of the pupils' view that:

‘... the school's referral system is ineffective’ (p.12).

In response to the students' observations that some pupils' behaviour continued to be poor despite the many referrals that had been submitted, she observes:

‘To me this raised an important issue about a lack of pupil awareness regarding the difficulties of others ... The reality is that those with behavioural difficulties are different’ (pp.12-13).

Her rejection of their viewpoint is surprising, given her reference to the literature on the folly of disregarding student opinion.

Other studies have demonstrated pupils' views regarding the accountability of school systems beyond the classroom for determining discipline. The students in Araújo's (2005) study viewed school factors beyond the classroom in a positive light:

'... pupils saw the school's leadership and management as helping to improve behaviour. Disruption was thought to have been kept under control when rules became more and stricter' (p.255).

McCluskey (2008), however, found that amongst the student participants there was:

'... a high level of dissatisfaction with school systems of discipline and methods of dealing with disruption' (p.452).

As our study does, McCluskey's work offers a new perspective on pupil indiscipline by ascertaining the views of a wider range of students than has previously been the case, those she describes as:

'... more settled pupils ... the generality of pupils, "the majority of pupils who are hard working and well behaved"' (p.450).

Forty-six boys and girls attending two academically successful schools in affluent areas and two schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas participated in her study. She found that these pupils were critical of teachers' abilities to control their classes:

“Pupils get away with mucking about” and “Teachers are too soft” ... In all four groups, there were calls for teachers to be stricter’ (p.454).

The findings from these studies reiterate earlier work on this phenomenon. Woods (1990), for example, found that pupils believed that good teachers should be able to teach pupils in interesting and engaging ways, be human and warm towards their pupils, as well as share humour with them. Furthermore, teachers were expected to be fair and able to keep their classes in order. These studies also highlight a dichotomy at the heart of discourses arising from student perspectives. Pupils express their desire for teachers to be strict and to exercise control on the one hand, and on the other, to develop positive relationships with their students.

Pomeroy (1999) recommends an ideal model of the teacher-student relationship based on the accounts provided by the students she interviewed. She asserts that:

‘The key question for policy and practice then, is what impedes the development of a model of relations which recognises the students’ capacity for more adult-like interactions? Consideration must be given to both the structural and interpersonal features of school life which hinder the development of positive and mutually respectful relations between teachers and students who experience difficulty at school’ (p.480).

Pomeroy’s question and imperative to review existing structures imply that teachers and schools are responsible for pupil indiscipline. Others agree that

schools contribute to problem behaviour as a result of their focus on control rather than education. For example, Schostak (1986) claims:

‘... schools ... are uninspiring, conflict-ridden, production orientated ... and anti-democratic’ (p.57).

More recently, some authorities have recognised the beneficial impact positive relationships make (Roffey, 2010; Downey, 2008). Roffey asserts:

‘There is ... increasing evidence that where schools emphasise relational values and quality there are fewer behavioural difficulties and more engaged students’ (2010, p.282).

Interplay of factors that influence behaviour

Other discourses are evident in the literature that advocate an anti-reductionist approach to understanding children’s misbehaviour. Sellman *et al.* (2002) illustrate this stance and maintain that a survey of the literature indicates a complex interplay between social institutions and individuals. They recommend Cole’s (1996) ‘cultural psychology’ as an analytical tool to understand the interplay between behaviour and context across different settings from national policy, through LEA organisation, school organisation, classroom organisation, lesson to activity task. Tudge (1997) also highlights the complexity of interconnected phenomena and recommends:

‘... studying aspects of developing individuals, relations between those individuals and their immediately surrounding world (both people and objects), and the broader cultural-historical context. Analysis at only one level is insufficient to make sense of development’ (p.121).

Literature from a range of contexts supports the view that pupil indiscipline emanates from a variety of factors. Having investigated the responses of Greek elementary school teachers to students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, Poulou and Norwich (2002) conclude that:

‘... teachers did not perceive a single cause of EBD. They rather perceived a multi-causality of EBD, involving teacher, school and child factors’ (p.127).

Jones (2003) suggests that:

‘... the anti-medical discourse ... drew attention to the importance of classroom relationships and communication patterns vis-à-vis hostility in the classroom ... however, it promoted the sentiment that teachers who claim that a pupil “has” a problem ought to question their own expectations. Such sentiments deny school realities as some teachers and EPs experience them: namely that some pupils *are* troubled, not merely troublesome’ (p.152).

Various writers have identified the significance of interactions between people in understanding how challenging behaviour arises. Cooper *et al.* (1994) advocate understanding:

‘... behaviour problems in school in terms of the interactions of the persons involved ... Within this framework, problem behaviour is not seen as originating from within pupils, but from within the interaction between pupils and teachers’ (p.25).

Lyons and O’Connor (2006) and McCluskey (2008) noted that children identified that negative interactions with peers, such as teasing and bullying, caused misbehaviour. Araújo (2005) also emphasised the importance of interactions in producing misbehaviour:

‘Pupils do not merely slip into *disruptive* or *disrupted* bodies; rather, discipline is negotiated daily in classrooms through interactions with both teachers and peers. It might to some extent reflect particular problems that pupils are facing at home, but often also seems to result from processes taking place at the school’ (pp.264-265).

Having considered the various discourses around challenging behaviour, I have attempted to make sense of them. This has been a taxing task given the levels of disagreement and the complexity of the issues involved. At the beginning of this process I wanted to uncover the causes of challenging behaviour. Lyons and

O'Connor (2006) have summed up the essence of the question I had wanted to answer. In addition, they have verbalised the feelings I have about the solution to my initial query:

'Where does the problem [challenging behaviour] lie? The question itself is flawed in that the problem lies across a range of factors and complex interaction between these factors and the individuals involved' (p. 228).

Accepting reductionist explanations of challenging behaviour, be they discourses around within-child causation theories or discourses that attribute misbehaviour to context, simply does not encompass the many facets in understanding how and why challenging behaviour arises. This viewpoint has influenced the decisions taken regarding how to investigate and address the issues raised in this study.

Approaches to Investigating and Addressing the Issues

This part of the literature review situates the research within a critical and anti-reductionist model which builds upon the work of Skidmore (2004) in addressing the issue of the inclusion and exclusion of pupils through research at school level. My exploration of the areas discussed here influenced the development of the research methodology.

A critical and anti-reductionist approach

Having studied Skidmore's (2004) review of the literature pertaining to the major traditions of research into the education of pupils with learning difficulties and his explanation of the reasons for his research at Downland School and Sealey Cove, I sought to extend some of the ideas he has developed.

Like Skidmore, I believe the reductionist positions of the psycho-medical, sociological and organisational paradigms are insufficient in scope to encompass the complexity of issues involved in the education of pupils with special educational needs in general, and the education of pupils presenting behavioural difficulties in particular. Furthermore, I agree with Daniels (2006) and Sellman *et al.* (2002) that Cole's (1996) metaphor of context as a weaving together of variables at individual and social levels is of value. This concept allows for different:

'... levels of explanation without direct reduction of one to another' (Daniels, 2006, p.108).

Daniels argues for:

'... an approach which does not treat the individual and sociocultural levels as discreet forms of analysis but rather seeks to understand how they are interdependent, if not co-creative' (ibid., p.105).

I agree that such an approach alleviates the tension between proponents of theories adopting within person explanations for emotional and behavioural difficulties and exponents of systemic accounts of causation.

I also support Skidmore's (2004) approach, which he argues builds on an emerging body of work (Booth, 1996; Slee, 1995; Allan, 1996, 1997; Corbett, 1996; Hart 1996; Clark *et al.*, 1997; Copeland, 1995, 1996, 1997) and which is both critical and anti-reductionist:

'... critical, in the sense that current educational practices, and the ideologies used to support them, are not taken as given, but seen as the outcome of a specific process of development; and anti-reductionist in the sense that educational practice as it is manifest in the working life of schools should be seen as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, which cannot be treated as the product of a single determining factor' (p.40).

Having investigated this emerging tradition, I wish to align myself with the broad characteristics identified by Skidmore (op.cit.) that typify it. Firstly, research in this area:

'... is supported by an evidential base, and analysis proceeds through an engagement with empirical data' (ibid., p.40).

Studies within this tradition focus on how people experience the issues being examined and theory is developed through induction. This avoids the weakness of some research into special educational needs carried out within the sociological paradigm which applied concepts from general sociological theory to special education without supporting claims with empirical evidence (Skidmore, 2004). I intend to undertake research that meets these criteria.

Secondly, analysis within this emerging tradition utilises critical theory developed in other fields in order to locate the processes of inclusion and exclusion within a broader social context (Skidmore, 2004). This, I believe, is crucial because the processes of inclusion and exclusion within education are interwoven with wider political objectives that inevitably shape the experience of school communities.

Thirdly, the key writers in this area are aware of the ways in which present practices in special education have been influenced by historical developments (Skidmore, 2004). For example the use of Individual Education Plans, as recommended by *The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001a), maintains a focus on an individualised system of support and is at variance with other aspects of the Code which recognize that learning difficulties may be the result of deficiencies in the school rather than the weaknesses of the child (Skidmore, 2004). Some have argued that an individualised system may constrain the development of more innovative whole school provision based on curricular and pedagogical initiatives (Clark *et al.*, 1997; Millward and Skidmore, 1995, 1998).

Fourthly, authors in this area tend to support a move towards a more inclusive form of educational provision and acknowledge their values and intentions (Skidmore, 2004). Such a stance reflects my own position and whilst, like other writers in this tradition, I am committed to a rigorous engagement with the empirical evidence I gather and fully accept the need for reflexive self-criticism, I openly acknowledge my wish to improve the situation within the school for all pupils.

Skidmore identifies a gap in the literature associated with a:

‘... critical perspective towards the inclusion and exclusion of pupils with difficulties in learning in contemporary educational practice’ (ibid., p.39).

He maintains that this emerging tradition mainly focuses on either national policy or individual interactions and experiences, that is, at the macro or micro levels. He also acknowledges that research has been undertaken at classroom level. Consequently, he suggests that research is needed at school level, the ‘meso’ level, as investigation in this domain, based on in-depth, evidence-based accounts, is less well represented in this tradition.

This gap provided Skidmore with the opportunity to extend the emerging critical, anti-reductionist tradition by undertaking research at two English secondary schools in order to devise more inclusive frameworks of provision for pupils with special educational needs. Our research is also situated in this area.

Rights, voice, participation and children as researchers

The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) marked a significant milestone in the development of the rights of children. It advocated that children’s best interests are to be a primary consideration in policy and decision-making processes. Articles 12 and 13 require that children’s views must be sought and given due weight in all matters that affect them. This study is situated within this arena. It endeavours to encourage those working in education to listen to

children in school and to take into account their views when making decisions that affect them. I am aware that in promoting children's rights, there is the potential to neglect to recognise children's *human* rights. In line with other authorities, I also advocate children's human rights (Kellett, 2010b; O'Byrne, 2003) and agree that:

'... children have a fundamental human right to quality research about their childhood and their lives ... When researchers collect data with or from children they raise expectations in those children that some benefit may accrue to them either through greater understanding and tolerance of their views or changes that will improve their lives' (Kellett, 2010b, p.77).

I support Nieto's (1994) assertion about listening to students' views regarding school policies:

'One way of beginning the process of changing school policies is to listen to students' views about them; however, research that focuses on student voices is relatively recent and scarce' (p.396).

There has been a rapidly growing literature on student voice and the possibilities it highlights for the future of schools (Fielding, 2004); however, there is a discrepancy between rhetoric and reality, for as Riley and Docking (2004) observe:

'Although recent government initiatives have drawn attention to the importance of listening to young people, attempts to

pay attention to their views about their education experience are rare' (p.166).

I am conscious of:

'... the importance of not speaking for other people but letting voices be heard in their own words without the encumbrance of authorial interference, misrepresentation or even colonisation' (Armstrong, 2003, p 4).

I also acknowledge that:

"“Child voice” has become a powerful moral crusade and consequently criticism of voice has been muted' (Lewis, 2010, p.14).

Lewis notes that increasingly researchers and practitioners are expressing reservations about 'child voice', particularly in relation to the purposes that stimulate interest in this area as well as the associated ethical protocols.

Moreover, I am mindful of Lundy's (2007) argument that:

'... Article 12 is one of the most widely cited yet commonly misunderstood of all the provisions of the UNCRC. It is often mentioned under the banner of “the voice of the child”, or “pupil voice”, as it is more commonly referred to in education. Other abbreviations include: “the right to be heard”, “the right to participate” and/or “the right to be consulted”. While these provide a convenient shorthand which helps to avoid the use

of Article 12's long-winded and somewhat awkward construction, each has the potential to diminish its impact as they convey an imperfect summary of what it requires' (p.930).

Various authorities (Alderson, 2000a; Kilkelly et al., 2005; Lundy, 2007; Rose and Shelvin, 2010) have highlighted the issue of tokenism in relation to seeking the involvement of children in matters affecting them. Rose and Shelvin (2010) contend that:

'... it is important to recognize the need to avoid tokenistic practices whereby pupil consultation becomes a blasé procedure undertaken in a superficial manner in order to satisfy school requirements or to falsely indicate a commitment to pupil involvement' (p.139).

A number of authors (Lundy, 2007; Robson *et al.*, 2009; Kellett, 2010b) agree that those who have elicited children's voices as part of adult-initiated consultations or research do not necessarily inform participants about their findings and results.

Robson *et al.* (2009) maintain that:

'There is a strong moral and ethical argument that those who contribute to research have a right to know the research findings, although this rarely actually happens' (p.475)

As a result, children may become disinclined to share their views because of:

'... "consultation fatigue"' (Lundy, 2007, p.934)

given that:

‘... the endless consultations ... they engage in that appear to lead to nothing’ (Kellett, 2010b, p.77).

Many advocate focusing on participation rather than on voice alone. Hill *et al.* (2004) define participation as:

‘... the direct involvement of children in decision-making about matters that affect their lives, whether individually or collectively’ (p.83).

Various models have been proposed that facilitate assessing the effectiveness of participation including Hart’s (1992) ladder of participation, Shier’s (2001) pathways to participation and, more recently, Lundy’s four-fold framework:

‘... successful implementation of Article 12 requires consideration of the implications of four separate factors: Space, Voice, Audience and Influence ...

- Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express their views
 - Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views
 - Audience: The view must be listened to
 - Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate’
- (2007, pp.932-933).

Many authorities acknowledge the necessity of viewing Article 12 within the context of other rights:

‘... in particular: Article 2 (non-discrimination); Article 3 (best interests); Article 5 (right to guidance); Article 13 (right to seek, receive and impart information); and Article 19 (protection from abuse)’ (ibid., p.933).

Beazley *et al.* (2006) highlight the interdependence of rights in research with children and add Article 36 (protection from all forms of exploitation) to Articles 2, 3 and 13. Robson *et al.* (2009) also note the interaction of children’s rights regarding participation, education and protection from exploitation (Articles 28 and 32). They recognise how the promotion of individual rights can jeopardise others. They found that children’s right to participate compromised their right to formal schooling as their involvement in the research coincided with term time.

These issues require careful consideration. Many authorities argue that the benefits accrued through research for children make these efforts eminently worthwhile, including promoting their rights and fostering their wellbeing and development (Tisdall *et al.*, 2008; Hill *et al.*, 2004). In addition, the literature demonstrates that children’s participation can improve the services they use (Gordon and Russo, 2009; Woolfson *et al.*, 2008). Clark and Moss (2001, 2005) and Kellett (2010a) demonstrate how young children can actively participate in research with competence and confidence and that their contributions can stimulate improvements in the provision they access.

I discovered Fielding’s (2004) work in the early stages of my search of the literature on pupil voice. His rationale convinced me of the value and potential of the dialogic model of student voice and I endorsed his contention that:

‘... the potential for transformation is more likely to reside in arrangements which require the active engagement of students and teachers working in partnership than in those which either exclude teachers or treat student voice as an instrument of teacher or state purposes’ (p.306).

Consequently, I used the *student as co-researcher* model described by Fielding. It reflected the enquiry I undertook as it acknowledged that the investigation could not succeed without the involvement and commitment of students as:

‘... fellow researchers, enquirers and makers of meaning’
(ibid., p.307).

I acknowledged and understood the difficulties and limitations Fielding outlined with regard to the use of a dialogic model of student voice work in schools:

‘... there are no spaces, physical or metaphorical, where staff and students meet one another as equals, as genuine partners in the shared undertaking of making meaning of their work together. Until and unless such spaces emerge transformation will remain rhetorical rather than real’ (ibid., p.309).

Fielding’s (2007) later work recognises:

‘... the limitations of “voice” as a metaphor for student engagement ... “voice” has too much about it that smacks of singularity, of presumed homogeneity, of deferential dependence on the unpredictable dispensations of those

who deftly tune the acoustics of the school to the frequencies of a benign status quo' (p.306).

Furthermore, he recognises that pupil consultation carries the risk of engaging:

'... a small number of pupils who fit an idealised, usually middle-class, template' (ibid., p.302).

Other authorities acknowledge that consultation can ignore:

'The voices of young people from marginalised groups within society' (Rose and Shelvin, 2004, p.155).

Our study demonstrates the value of the dialogic model as a way of engaging the *generality* of pupils and teachers and also that spaces can be created within schools that allow students and staff to work in partnership and challenge the status quo.

There is consensus in the literature that the past twenty years have seen changes in how children are perceived as a result of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the movement towards recognising children as social actors in their own right and therefore as participating subjects in research, rather than objects of enquiry. As a result of these influences there has been:

'... a surge of participatory and voice initiatives that propelled children into the research arena with a new agency' (Kellett, 2010b, p.7).

Moreover:

'Recent years have witnessed a radical re-positioning of research involving children ... The focus shifted from research "on" children to research "with" children and ultimately widening this focus to include research "by" children' (ibid., pp.6-7).

Although children's views are frequently solicited, attempts to do so have been criticised as perfunctory and adult-orientated (Alderson, 2000a; Kellett *et al.*, 2004), inasmuch as:

'Sometimes children are involved as participants, even co-researchers, but this is commonly at a data-collection level only and it is adults who formulate the research questions, design the methodologies, analyse the data and disseminate the findings. Adult filters are at work at every stage of the research process' (Kellett, 2009, p.399).

Kellett advocates adults *supporting* children conducting their own research, rather than *managing* them (2009, 2010b). She suggests that:

'One way to minimise adult filters and maximise child voice is to hand over the research reins to children themselves, empower them as active researchers in their own right so that they lead the research from design to dissemination with

adult *support* rather than adult *management* (Kellett, 2009, p.399)

Kellett dismisses scepticism regarding children's ability to undertake empirical research based on notions of barriers presented by age and competence. Her own work (2010a; Kellet *et al.*, 2004) clearly shows that children can undertake research, having received appropriate training in the requisite skills.

My experiences of working with students as co-researchers, as well as my reading of more recent literature on student voice, lead me to share Lundy's (2007) view that:

"'Voice' is not enough' (p.927).

I also agree with her observation that:

'If Article 12 is to be implemented fully in the UK's schools, action needs to be taken to ensure that children are involved at each of the stages at which decisions are made which will ultimately impact on the child in the classroom' (ibid., p.931).

Whole school approach

Focusing attention on the school in order to address pupil behaviour has gained increased interest since the Elton Committee's (DES, 1989) emphasis on whole school approaches to discipline. Since then academics and policy makers have advocated that the systems and processes operating in schools should be scrutinised in order to identify and alleviate ways in which they may cause or

exacerbate pupils' difficult behaviour, rather than solely considering the need to analyse and treat the individual child's behaviour (Thomas and Loxley, 2001). Rutter *et al.*'s study (1979) demonstrated that the structure and organisation of schools can make a difference to pupil behaviour even in disadvantaged areas. Wayson *et al.* (1982) observed the effectiveness of whole school approaches in their study of more than a thousand well-disciplined schools. They identified common characteristics including, firstly, the creation of a whole school environment facilitating good discipline as opposed to the pursuit of isolated measures to tackle discipline problems and, secondly, the tendency for teachers to deal with all or most of the routine problems themselves. Watkins and Wagner (1995) suggest that a wide-ranging approach is required if schools wish to address behaviour and may involve thinking about, and intervening in, virtually all aspects of how a school is run, including the behaviour of pupils, teachers and the school as an organisation.

Collaborative research

Through the process of this study we have created space within our school for student voice to be heard. Collaborative research (Schensul and Schensul, 1992), in the sense of equal participation of researchers and those who are the focus of research (Angrosino, 2005) reflects our research purposes on pragmatic and ideological grounds. This research led to change and development within the school and embraced Oja and Smulyan's (1989) suggestion that there is a greater likelihood of teachers changing their behaviours and attitudes if they have

been involved in research that demonstrates that change is necessary and viable.

Such a viewpoint also reflects my own ideological standpoint with regard to the issue of power. I share Torres' (1992) belief that those experiencing the issue being considered should be involved in the decision-making process and that the research process should involve popular participation and raise the consciousness of individuals and groups. Collaborative research is concerned with:

'Who gets to tell official stories about education?' (Freebody, 2003, p.58).

Collaborative approaches provide the opportunity for multiple 'voices' in the analysis and reporting of findings, and they locate the research process within authentic accounts of both the researchers and the researched. Finally, they emphasise the process of our research and:

'... the productive development of a community of change within the research site' (ibid., p.59).

This literature review provides the background for our story regarding pupils who are seen by others as challenging. It demonstrates the interest and contention that matters of challenging behaviour and inclusion excite in academic circles and more broadly within society. Furthermore, it illustrates the lack of consensus in defining either challenging behaviour or inclusion. Thus, it has provided the backdrop for our research question about the perceptions relating to these two

concerns amongst the students and staff of our school. Given that a limited amount of research has explored the views of pupils, the study seeks to understand what life is like in schools in relation to these two topics for pupils, reflecting our second research question. As schools' policies and practices significantly shape children's experience of education, it is pertinent to ask how they relate to inclusion, providing the focus for the third question. Research into the impact of school-level factors is relatively limited (Skidmore, 2004) and therefore this research seeks to address this in relation to pupil behaviour and inclusion. Our fourth question considers the development of a collaborative whole school approach to the inclusion of marginalised children by eliciting the views of the people who would be involved in such a venture: children, support staff and teachers.

The issues arising from this literature review and how they relate to our research questions have shaped the decisions we have taken regarding how to undertake this investigation. Central to this is a commitment to developing a critical and anti-reductionist approach and fundamental is the decision to embark on collaborative research that emphasises student voice. Consequently, ascertaining the views of the various groups that make up the school community has been prioritised. Moreover, working alongside students in the design and development of the research has been of paramount importance, as will be apparent in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Theory and research

The participative and collaborative nature of this study has influenced the decisions taken concerning research strategies. I came to realise during the course of the research that the study reflected particular stances regarding the relationship between theory and research, as well as epistemology and ontology, held by my co-researchers and myself. The questions the pupils wanted to explore, the research methods they chose and developed, as well as their analysis of the data, indicated particular viewpoints. Therefore, what follows is a summary of the conceptual frameworks that underpin the conduct of this study:

‘... qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretative methods, always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience they have studied’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.21).

As qualitative researchers we have adhered to this tradition and have drawn upon and utilised approaches that we believe:

‘... can provide insights and knowledge’ (Nelson *et al.*, 1992, p.2).

Consequently, both hermeneutics and phenomenology have been incorporated as they reflect the purposes of this research given that:

‘Hermeneutics ... is concerned with the theory and method of the interpretation of human action. It emphasizes the need to

understand from the perspectives of the social actor'

(Bryman, 2004, p.540)

and:

'... phenomenology ... is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world' (ibid., p.13).

Furthermore, this research is situated in the constructivist paradigm as it:

'... assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.24).

This particular interpretive framework reflects the beliefs that underpin this study. These fundamental considerations have resulted in the adoption of a 'case study' as the research design.

Case study was chosen because it lends itself to the detailed and intensive analysis of the way the school, as a single case, addresses concerns regarding challenging behaviour. The case study design provides an appropriate framework for the collection and analysis of data within qualitative research and has a proven record as a means of investigating a single school (Ball, 1981; Burgess, 1983). Furthermore, the case study provides the scope for 'thick description' (Geertz,

1973) of real people in real situations and therefore is strong on reality (Adelman *et al.*, 1980; Nisbet and Watt, 1984).

The case study does have limitations as generalisation is not always possible and consequently some critics question the value of studying single events (Bell, 1999). However, not everyone agrees with this criticism. Denscombe (2007) observes:

‘The extent to which findings from the case study can be generalized to other examples in the class depends on how far the case study example is similar to others of its type’
(p.43).

Further, Bassey (1981) proposes that:

‘...an important criterion for judging the merit of a case study is the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate for a teacher working in a similar situation to relate his decision making to that described in the case study. The relatibility of a case study is more important than its generalisability’ (p.85).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose ‘trustworthiness’ as a criterion for assessing how good a qualitative study is. Such a measure is appropriate for this study. ‘Trustworthiness’ comprises of four elements: credibility – how believable the findings are; transferability – the extent to which the findings apply to other situations; dependability – the extent to which the findings are likely to apply at other times, and confirmability – the extent to which the researcher has allowed

personal values to impinge upon the investigation. These terms are often used in qualitative studies instead of the more traditional criteria of validity and reliability, which have their roots in quantitative research. In addition, Hammersley's (1992) proposal of relevance as a criterion, that is to say, the contribution a study makes to the literature in the field, is apposite.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity requires the researcher to be aware of the impact on the research process of his/her own particular social identity, background and values (Robson, 2002). I appreciate my need for reflexivity as a way of countering bias given Robson's cautionary observation about flexible design research, which I consider to be of relevance to this study:

'There is typically a close relationship between the researcher and the setting, and between the researcher and the respondents. Indeed, the notion of the 'researcher-as-instrument' emphasizes the potential for bias' (p.172).

The process of reflexivity has enabled me to see that I am inextricably bound up in the research I am undertaking and therefore I must make explicit, to myself and others, how my own presence in the research impacts upon how it proceeds. It has also reinforced for me the issue of the multiple identities of the researcher. My various identities have influenced the area I have chosen to study, my choice of methodology and research methods, as well as how I see, understand and interpret phenomena within the setting. It may therefore not be possible for me to

be truly and fully objective, if this is possible at all, but I can nevertheless strive to furnish as honest and trustworthy an account as possible.

Two theoretical frameworks have enabled me to come to terms with issues relating to my multiple identities and have contributed to a transformation of how this research has been conducted. Firstly, Hellowell's (2006) notion of a multiple series of parallel insider-outsider researcher continua offered me a way of understanding and developing my role as a researcher. Secondly, Blumenthal's (1999) concept of the divided self enabled me to understand that taking on the role of 'researcher-as-instrument' (Robson, 2002, p.172) is more complex than I had originally envisaged.

Hellowell's work enabled me to see myself as both an insider and outsider researcher. I recognise myself as an insider in a number of ways and to varying degrees: as a member of staff, as a Christian, as a teacher. In terms of other continua, I am relatively an outsider: as a female working in the predominantly male environment of a boys' school, as the only female teacher on the SLT, as an adult and high status teacher in relation to the pupils participating in the research.

Hellowell assisted me in addressing concerns about my position of authority within the research setting as I felt reassured that it would be possible to carry out research in my school. The key to success was to be fully engaged in the process of reflexivity.

My experiences and subsequent reflections upon them, lead me to share Blumenthal's (1999) conceptualization of the self as fundamentally *co-created*:

‘... others are necessary to construct the self. ... as we relate to different people, we collect identities. ... the self is difficult to grasp because it shifts over time in response to the changing types and qualities of our relationships’ (p.383).

I have come to realise that my identity in the early stages of this research, as an assistant headteacher and therefore an influential authority figure within the school, was formed in relation to others. Initially, I did not fully absorb this identity. The feedback I received in response to my Year One Final Report, with its focus on my role as an authority figure, in a strange way finally established my identity as a senior leader in my own mind. It took the realisation that others related to me as an authority figure to make this role a reality for me.

My reflections have not only heightened my awareness of the complexities involved in being a researcher in a setting where I am a member of staff who occupies a leadership position, but have also underlined emphatically the reality of ethical issues pertaining to my own circumstances. This process enabled me to move from a ‘text book’ understanding of ethical matters to an understanding of how they affect me, and those participating in the research, in a very real and personal way.

Children as researchers

There is agreement in the literature that little is available that contributes to understanding how to ascertain the views and usual experiences of young people (Hill *et al* 1996; Morrow and Richards, 1996; McCluskey, 2008). This is especially

so in relation to explanations of the practicalities and ethics involved (Morrow and Richards, 1996; McCluskey, 2008). Moreover, McCluskey notes:

‘... within education itself there seems to be a reluctance about consulting pupils’ (p.451).

This study is situated within the gap identified by these authors. We now turn to a consideration of the story of this research and the practicalities and ethics involved.

I discovered the work of Rose (1998, 2001) whose research methodology, User Focused Monitoring (UFM), proved to be a watershed in my thinking about my research. Using UFM, questionnaires were devised through collaboration between researchers and mental health service users. This process resulted in the production of questionnaires that were different from the professional research questionnaires that are generally used, because they were derived from a service user perspective (Rose, 2003). In addition, service users also carried out interviews and these factors appear to have affected interviewees' responses. Interviewers reported that service users visibly relaxed and were candid once they realised that the interviewers had shared their experiences of using mental health services. Consequently, the interviewers gained a different and more open response from their interviewees than professional researchers might have elicited.

Having assimilated Rose's ideas, I sought to ascertain whether there was a comparable literature relating to the active involvement of children as researchers, as they would be the equivalent of service users within the context of my research.

Initially, I found literature relating to the use of a variety of data collection methods with children, but my reflections on Rose's UFM had kindled a desire to involve students in a much more extensive way. I wanted them to be instrumental in developing the research at various stages, not just to respond to child-friendly data collection methods.

I then discovered the work of Kellett (Kellett *et al.*, 2004) who demonstrates that children aged 10 years old can carry out their own research with training and support provided by adult researchers. She suggests that this process empowers children in two ways. Firstly, by teaching children about the research process they gain the tools needed to devise their own research agendas, enabling them to investigate issues they consider significant in their lives and giving a voice to these issues through dissemination. Secondly, the process of learning about research promotes children's awareness of their own expert knowledge, skills and understanding beyond the research context into the arena of their own lives and those of their peers. She highlights Clark's (2004) use of methodologies that play to children's strengths and the view that children's competence is 'different' from adults', not 'lesser'. The point regarding the competence of children inspired me to seek the involvement of students as researchers in this study.

Despite my initial jubilation at discovering Kellett's study, I subsequently noted aspects of her work that were not appropriate in my own situation including the decision to invite children identified by their teachers as amongst the most 'able' to participate. Kellett acknowledges that she is not proposing that *only* able children can undertake research of the kind presented in her article. However, she

suggests that the level of support and training be adjusted accordingly, in light of the children involved:

‘The challenge is to find appropriate techniques that neither exclude nor patronise children’ (Kellett, *et al.*, 2004, p.331).

I agree with this and wanted a wider range of children to be represented rather than just those considered by teachers to be able, to reflect the fact that my school caters for a broad range of children.

Originally, I had set out to offer the children participating in the research a range of data collection methods for them to *choose* from and therefore I was drawn to techniques considered to be child-friendly or child-centric. The reasons for this approach included a desire to address power relations between myself as researcher and an authority figure within the research setting by promoting the children’s ability to choose for themselves from a number of options that reflected their interests and capabilities. I had gleaned novel methodological ideas from the literature on involving children in research (Darbyshire *et al.*, 2005; Einarsdottir, 2005; Driessnack, 2006; Duckett *et al.*, 2008; Barker and Weller, 2003; Punch, 2002; Christensen and James, 2008; Greene and Hogan, 2005; Fraser *et al.*, 2004). These authors introduced me to a wider range of research methods than I had previously encountered.

Subsequently, the principle of choosing extended beyond the selection of data collection methods to choosing the degree to which the children wanted to be involved in the research process. Some elected only to respond to data collection

methods, whilst others chose to be involved in different stages of the research including devising the research questions and alternative data collection methods, analysing data and report writing.

Ethical considerations

I was concerned about the ethical implications of children contributing to this study both as participants and as co-researchers. I did not want to exploit them in order to achieve a highly regarded academic qualification for myself. My working with them was guided by careful consideration of key ethical issues highlighted by researchers who are experienced in working with children as both participants and co-researchers (Alderson, 1995, 2000b; West, 1999; Hill, 2005) and informed by BERA (2004) guidelines.

My invitation to students was guided by:

‘... key principles [which] underpin an ethical approach to research. These include respect for persons, equity, non-discrimination and “beneficence”, that is avoiding harm and protecting the weak’ (Hill, 2005, p.65).

Alderson (1995) has developed a framework that helps to ensure that these rights are respected and I have attempted to address these ethical issues in this study. Therefore, I have ensured that the research serves the children’s interests and I have evaluated the costs and benefits of it in relation to them. I have focused on the issues relating to privacy and confidentiality and ensured that the children were aware of the choices they had in the research, including withdrawing from it at any

time. I have been mindful of issues relating to inclusion and exclusion and this concern had underpinned my decision to involve the generality of pupils, rather than focusing on a particular group. The other issues identified by Alderson were also considered in depth and determined the way the research was conducted, including matters connected with funding, information, consent, dissemination, involvement and accountability, and finally, the impact it has on the children themselves, especially in improving policy and practice in relation to them.

A prominent concern was to gain informed consent from the young people I wished to invite to participate. Methodological texts alerted me to the two stages involved in ensuring informed consent with children:

‘First, researchers consult and seek permission from those adults responsible for the prospective subjects, and second, they approach the young people themselves’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.54).

Consequently, in the first instance I requested permission from my headteacher to approach parents and ask that they allow me to invite their sons to take part. He agreed to this. I then placed a notice in the school's newsletter explaining the research and announcing that I would write to parents asking them for permission to speak to their children regarding their possible participation. This step was taken to avoid parents and children assuming that particular individuals had been identified as challenging.

I selected pupils on the basis of two criteria. One group was chosen using school records of students who had been internally excluded in response to serious breaches of school discipline. The second group was selected on the basis of being generally considered by staff to be well-behaved. Thus, the research sample *taken as a whole* would not identify or label a particular group

I sent letters to the parents of thirty eight children asking them to indicate whether or not they would permit me to invite their sons to participate in this research (Appendix 1). Only one parent responded saying that she did not want her son to be involved. A number of parents did not reply. Having received permission from the other parents, I wrote individually to their sons asking them to indicate on a reply slip whether they would like to take part in the research (Appendix 1). All pupils who indicated that they would like to participate were then invited to meet, either individually with me or as part of a larger group, so that I could explain the research fully and ask them to take part. One pupil asked to meet on an individual basis and the others agreed to attend a group meeting. Two separate meetings were convened; one for Key Stage Three pupils and one for Key Stage Four pupils (Appendix 1). This was done to facilitate students in feeling comfortable to ask questions and make comments.

At these meetings I explained the research focus and the choices available regarding taking part as participants and co-researchers and the kinds of methods we could use. I also explained ethical issues regarding informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and their right to withdraw from the research without sanction at any time. Further meetings took place to discuss the research methods available and what they entailed. Pupils were asked to indicate on a proforma

(Appendix 2) the methods they would like to use to share their views. They were also asked to suggest any other approaches that might elicit information from participants. In addition, at various stages throughout the research students indicated their desire to become involved as co-researchers.

This process was time-consuming, but I felt it was necessary in order to ensure that the students were able to make decisions about their involvement based on their appreciation of what participation entailed and that they were in control of the extent to which they wished to be involved. In addition, I wanted them to have a clear understanding of their choices regarding the research methods they could use, as well as their right to curtail their involvement at any point. All of the students agreed to be involved and therefore twenty four participants took part in the study, with fourteen of them volunteering to be co-researchers as well as participants. Those opting to be co-researchers included both 'challenging' and 'non-challenging' students, as did the group choosing to be involved only as participants.

Throughout the study I met frequently with the co-researchers. On each occasion we discussed whether or not they wanted to continue their involvement or wished to withdraw for any reason. These discussions were always relaxed and supportive to enable students to raise any issues that were of concern to them. I also liaised with staff to ensure that the co-researchers' involvement would not compromise their educational opportunities or personal well-being. The students were aware of this communication and understood that I did this with their best interests in mind.

I tried to ensure that the adults who agreed to participate in the research would do so on the basis of informed consent. I made sure that the permission the headteacher had given me about contacting possible participants extended to staff. I explained the purposes of the research and what it involved, as well as the measures in place to safeguard confidentiality, anonymity and the right to suspend participation, in writing initially and again before the interviews began. I offered them the opportunity to review their interview transcripts before they were finalised.

I e-mailed all teaching and support staff explaining the research and issues relating to confidentiality. I invited them to participate by completing the questionnaire that had been devised by the student researcher and sent it as an attachment with the email (Appendix 1). I also explained that I would distribute hardcopies of the questionnaire via staff pigeonholes and by leaving them in reception. Twenty six completed questionnaires were returned. Some staff had identified themselves whilst others remained anonymous. I sent a second e-mail to staff inviting them to take part in interviews with me and reiterated my earlier points regarding confidentiality (Appendix 1).

All participants knew that a written report would be produced, and they accepted my explanations and assurances about the research and the safeguards put into place. They appeared to be comfortable in sharing their experiences and perspectives as they did so openly and frankly.

Drawings

I chose to include drawings in the selection of methods available to the children because I thought this medium would be familiar to them and something they might enjoy doing, therefore those choosing this method might become more actively involved in the research. Punch (2002), includes other advantages in her reflection on the use of drawings in her study and I consider these advantages to be relevant to this research. The production of drawings empowers children as it gives them time to think about what they wish to portray and to add to, or change, the images. As with their taking of photographs, they control what is subsequently discussed in interviews, inasmuch as the drawings provide the stimulus for the discussion and thus help avoid imposing adult-centred concerns (Sapkota and Sharma, 1996).

I agree that:

‘The drawings themselves are rich visual illustrations which directly show how children see their world’ (Punch, 2002, p.331).

However, I believe that the interpretation and meaning rests with the children producing the images and not with the researcher (Hart, 1992) and, therefore I reject Punch’s (2002) data analysis approach. I am not convinced by her assertion that their drawings were:

‘... self-explanatory and representative, it was even felt to be insulting to ask the children what they had drawn, when it

was quite clear that they had drawn a tree, a flower, or a house' (p.332).

The meaning of the image to the child is the crucial point, as Barker and Weller (2003) realised when considering a drawing produced by a child to show her journey to school. The image by itself would not have allowed a researcher to penetrate its meaning for the child as there was a whole story around friendship, enjoyment, disappointment and independence that would have remained hidden had not the child talked the researcher through its significance. Compared to this, I find Punch's (2002) confidence in her ability to interpret children's drawings to be misjudged and I believe that such an approach could easily lead to a simplistic or erroneous interpretation of children's drawings.

Punch may have subsequently realised the limitations of her approach to interpreting children's drawing, as she concludes that if she were to use drawings again as a research technique, she would try to ask all the children to explain what their drawings meant to them. Given both her and Barker and Weller's experiences, this was the approach that I adopted in this research.

Students talked through the significance of their drawings in interviews. The resulting transcripts were then analysed using qualitative thematic analysis (Seale, 2004) in order to identify the themes that emerged from the data.

Diaries and reflections

I chose to include diaries and reflections in the selection of data collection methods offered to the children as written forms of communication are central to the daily experiences of secondary school children (Barker and Weller, 2003). Although children may be proficient with this form of communication, and may even excel in it, as is the case with the two able children who authored the research reports included in Kellett's (Kellett *et al.*, 2004) study, this does not automatically mean it will be a method that will engage and sustain their interest and active involvement in a research project. This point has been demonstrated by Barker and Weller (*op.cit.*) who realised that for some children the diaries were *too much* like school work and therefore, their interest in the activity faded as time progressed.

Barker and Weller noted that the diaries produced significant variations in both the quantity and quality of data arising from these records. However, they recognise the value of this data collection method as they were able to gather in depth information from a sizeable minority of children. This accords with my experience of children keeping journals and reflections, as they produced rich data which allowed me to gain unexpected insights into their worlds. With one child's journal in particular, I recognise the sense of intimacy and the freedom to record feelings and experiences that participants might find difficult or embarrassing to discuss in an interview situation (Barker and Weller, 2003).

I offered the children the use of a digital voice recorder to keep a diary or to produce a reflection. Digitally recorded material was transcribed. The data from

transcripts, together with students' handwritten or word processed contributions, were then analysed qualitatively to enable themes to emerge from the data.

Participatory rural appraisal

To increase the range of research methods participants could select from, I included diagrammatical techniques adapted from participatory rural appraisal. These included spider diagrams, mind mapping and flow diagrams.

I elected to include PRA techniques for three main reasons. Firstly, I was drawn to this methodology because of its collaborative philosophical underpinnings:

‘The philosophy requires the researcher to acknowledge and appreciate that the research participants have the necessary knowledge and skills to be partners in the whole research process. In PRA, both the researcher and the researched collaborate and learn from each other ... the best source of information about the issues would be community members themselves’ (Maalim, 2006, p.178).

Thus, PRA focuses on the power relations involved in the research relationship and promotes a more equitable balance between researcher and participants. It is a bottom-up approach to development that empowers those directly affected by proposed changes through participation in the process (Omorodion, 2006). This encapsulates the second reason for my choosing to incorporate PRA techniques as it would signal my distancing from my role as an authoritative figure in the

research setting. Thirdly, PRA techniques would enable participants with varying literacy levels to be involved in the research process, without being constrained by actual or perceived limitations with regard to their written language skills. This was an important factor as I did not wish to limit participation in the research only to those who could write competently and confidently.

As in Maalim's (2006) study, the diagrammatical data produced were analysed qualitatively in order to identify themes. Participants were also given the opportunity to discuss their ideas in interviews and focus groups, and transcriptions arising from these were analysed in a similar way.

Focus groups

Participation in focus groups was offered to the children and support staff taking part. In a focus group a topic is discussed and through the interaction of the group a collective view emerges, rather than an individual view as is the case in an interview. Participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer and as a result:

‘The participants’ rather than the researchers’ agenda can predominate’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.376).

The fact that this method promotes the participants’ agenda made it an attractive option for me because of the possibilities it offers to address power relations between researcher and participants. I decided to go a step further by offering participants the choice of having me present as facilitator or to take this role

themselves as a collective. I explained that the role involved prompting participants to discuss the topic under review and encouraging the participation of all members in order to avoid dominance by some and silence by others (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

A group of six students from years seven to nine opted to take part in focus groups. They asked me to be present on the first occasion they met; however the group decided to meet on their own for their subsequent meeting. Six teaching assistants volunteered to participate in a focus group and chose to facilitate themselves.

Both groups agreed to record their discussions using digital voice recorders and the recordings were transcribed and analysed using qualitative thematic analysis (Seale, 2004). This process was used with all discussion and interview formats used in our research, except on one occasion when the digital recorder failed because the battery was not charged. All participants gave their permission for this procedure having had it explained to them prior to the day of the meeting and repeated just before it took place.

Despite the advantage of focus groups with regard to promoting participants' agenda and the fact that they are increasingly used in research with children because it is thought that they generally feel comfortable discussing matters in groups (Darbyshire *et al.*, 2005), focus groups have their disadvantages. These include the threat of over-exposure (Murray, 2006) and participants may regret personal revelations made during the discussions. Other issues involve the quantity and quality of data derived and difficulties in analysing them succinctly as

well as problems arising from group dynamics, including the possibilities of conflict and less articulate members being denied a voice (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

Questionnaires

I invited the children to suggest data collection techniques as those participating in Duckett *et al.*'s (2008) study had done. As a result, one of the students suggested a questionnaire and devised the questions for it (Appendix 3). He decided that pupils and staff should be invited to complete the questionnaire. In line with UFM (Rose, 2001), I asked him if he wanted to deliver the questionnaire to participants, but he declined and asked if I would take on this role.

Although I had not included questionnaires in my initial presentation of possible methods, I understand why the participant suggested this method, as it is one that the children in the research setting are used to. Surveys are distributed to pupils in order to obtain their views on a variety of issues and may also feature in their leisure activities, such as responding to questionnaires in teen magazines (Barker and Weller, 2003).

Group interviews

Group interviews were included following a comment made by one of the participants. On the research methods proforma (Appendix 2), which was designed to ascertain pupils' interest in using a variety of research techniques, he wrote in the 'Any questions or comments?' box:

'I would like to interview others, but I wouldn't like myself to be interviewed'.

We discussed the options available and he chose to conduct a semi-structured group interview and wrote the interview schedule for it (Appendix 4). He then selected a group of four pupils from his own year group, who had already agreed to participate in the research, to invite to take part in the interview. He agreed that his interview schedule could also be used by another co-researcher with a different group of participants.

Interviews with the adult researcher

I used a qualitative interviewing method with staff and pupils who volunteered to meet with me and share their views because this style of interview affords the opportunity to investigate ideas sensitively, flexibly and in-depth, and emphasises interest in the interviewee's point of view (Bryman, 2004). It is particularly useful for discovering people's attitudes and values. The qualitative interview:

'... allows interviewees to speak in their own voices and with their own language' (Seale, 2004, p.182).

As I wished to elicit the perspectives of participants, I chose to use an unstructured interview approach. This type of interview tends to be like a conversation (Burgess, 1984) and I hoped that participants would feel more comfortable sharing their views.

Documentary evidence

I also undertook an analysis of documentary evidence in order to supplement information gained through other methods. I devised a scrutiny schedule (Appendix 5) to enable me to undertake a structured, critical analysis of documents relating to behaviour and inclusion. I used this proforma to investigate systematically a range of school policies, procedure statements and reports compiled by staff detailing incidents of challenging behaviour.

Research Diary

I made a conscious decision not to keep a formal research diary, despite Robson's (2002) observation that:

'It is good practice to keep a full and complete record of all the various activities with which you are involved in connection with the project' (p.1).

I felt that it would be too onerous a task for my co-researchers to keep a research diary in addition to the research activities they were involved in, especially as many of them were preparing for their GCSE examinations. I wanted there to be parity and equity between us as research colleagues as far as possible. I concluded that if I were to keep a research diary my reflections would be given prominence, and I wanted to avoid this as far as I could. Instead, I decided to keep a personal journal in order to record incidents that were significant to me as my co-researchers were doing. This became a symbol for me of my move away from

traditional methods of research and my embracing of a more innovative approach that emphasised collaborative working with my co-researchers.

Critical friends

Throughout the course of this research I had the support of an independent 'reference group' which discussed the research with me on a regular basis. This group comprised teaching and support staff colleagues in the research setting and from other schools. In addition, my four teenage sons also listened to my ideas, offering suggestions and giving feedback, particularly in matters relating to working with students. These ongoing discussions were invaluable as they enabled me to see where my own bias and perceptions were in danger of creeping into the research. Working in this way facilitated my growth both as a researcher and as a person.

Sample

Morse (1994) offers important advice regarding the selection of a sample in a qualitative study. She maintains that the prime consideration should be the requirements of the study, rather than factors beyond the study as is the case with random selection. With this guidance in mind, a non-probability sample was deemed appropriate, given that the study targeted particular groups, in the knowledge that they do not necessarily represent the wider population and that it is commonly used in small-scale research projects (Robson, 2002). I am convinced that it meets the purposes of this research and is the preferred option

given that it is relatively inexpensive and straightforward to set up (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

I chose a purposive sample as the type of non-probability sample to use as it enables researchers to 'handpick' the participants on the basis of the researcher's judgement regarding their typicality relating to the issue under investigation. Consequently, I was able to construct a sample that satisfied my specific needs (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

Seven Key Stage Three students participated, two each from years seven and eight and three from year nine. Six of them participated in a focus group and five of them opted to take photographs, although only two of them completed this task. One of them chose to express his thoughts through drawings. One wrote a reflection and another kept a digitally recorded journal for a week. Two participated in peer interviews and five agreed to individual interviews with me. Three students became involved as co-researchers, with two of them taking on the role of interviewers and three of them contributing to the reporting of the findings.

Seventeen students from Key Stage Four took part, thirteen from year ten and four from year eleven. Six students wrote reflections, whilst another digitally recorded his. Four students wrote journals, with three of them doing so for a day and one for a week. Two students opted to produce drawings and another chose to express his ideas in a spider diagram. Two pupils participated in peer interviews, whilst eight students volunteered to take part in group interviews. Ten students took part in individual interviews with me.

Eleven of the Key Stage Four students took on roles as co-researchers. Five of them were involved in the formulation of the research questions. One student wrote an interview schedule and five pupils became interviewers. One pupil developed the protocol for participants taking photographs and another devised the questionnaire which was completed by twenty six members of staff and four hundred and thirty two students across all five year groups. Two students analysed the data arising from all the staff questionnaires and a sample of the returns received from students. Subsequently, they wrote a report on their findings and presented it to the school's senior leadership team.

In my discussions with children opting to use photographs, drawings, written activities and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques as preliminary methods for expressing their thoughts in preparation for follow-up interviews, I kept the brief minimal and just asked them to share their thoughts about behaviour in our school. I did this in order to minimise my impact on the research and to facilitate their determining of the research agenda.

In addition to the twenty six members of staff who completed questionnaires, six support staff, working both within and beyond classrooms, and eleven teachers agreed to take part in individual interviews with me. This latter group represented a variety of teaching staff in terms of experience in the profession and position held within the hierarchical structure of the school.

All eight teaching assistants employed at that time participated in the study and shared their views regarding behaviour and inclusion through completing questionnaires or compiling individual reflections in written or diagrammatical

formats. In addition, six of these participants subsequently took part in a focus group to discuss their views on these two issues. Two teaching assistants were unable to attend this discussion because of family commitments.

Analysing data

Qualitative thematic analysis (Seale, 2004) was used to analyse the data gathered. This method was selected in light of the fact that:

'... a great deal of qualitative analysis is done without particular reference to such specialist methodological approaches [conversation, discourse, grounded theory or semiotic analysis] and can be termed qualitative thematic analysis. ... "Qualitative thematic analysis" describes what many qualitative researchers actually do, and it often works very well indeed' (p.314).

As co-researchers had expressed an interest in analysing data, I wanted to adopt an approach that would enable them to undertake this aspect of the research without it becoming too burdensome. Qualitative thematic analysis offered what I was looking for and reflected approaches children are used to in their academic studies, such as looking at themes in prose and poetry texts during English lessons or thematic approaches used in their humanities lessons.

My co-researchers worked as a pair, as the peer-researchers did in the Barnardo's project reported in a paper by Coad and Evans (2008), identifying key words and

quotations from the data. I was intrigued by a comment in Coad and Evan's article concerning the idea that the differences in adults' and children's perceptions during the data analysis stage of research would be an interesting project, and so I introduced this idea in to our research. Hence, the co-researchers worked together in conducting their analysis, whilst I carried out mine separately. The findings arising from this approach are reported in Chapter Four.

The qualitative thematic approach used in this study follows a procedure suggested by Bryman (2004). To begin with qualitative data were read through and a few general points about what was felt to have been of interest or significance were noted down. The data were then re-read and notes written in the margin about significant points in the text. This began the process of coding, which generated an index of terms that helped in interpreting and theorising in relation to the data. The initial coding enabled the identification of themes of particular interest to be illustrated by the data. This process allows the meaning of code words to evolve as new pieces of data no longer fit existing categories or established categories require subtopics as further data is analysed.

By reading and re-reading data, as well as writing and reviewing notes made in the margins of the data collected and transcribed, we were able to identify categories for the coding process. Our re-examination of the notes enabled us to see that certain ideas were expressed in a number of terms and that data could be further reduced by identifying categories that encompassed related ideas. This process ensured that the data were organised and manageable for analysis. A definition was produced for each category to ensure it was distinct and so avoid the

proliferation of similar categories, thus simplifying the analysis of data. A key word was assigned as a code descriptor for each category.

The data were then systematically examined and each comment made by participants was carefully considered in relation to the code descriptors. The relevant key word was written next to each datum. Code descriptors were colour-coded and the related data highlighted in the allocated colour (Appendix 6). Any data that were not assigned a code descriptor initially were left uncoloured and reconsidered later to ascertain if they represented new or sub-categories, or if they necessitated the creation of further categories. Data relating to each category were re-read by reviewing the relevant colour-coded sections. This allowed us to check that we still agreed with the categories we had allocated to data, as well as to consider whether further categories were required or existing categories needed to be modified. Data were re-examined in light of amendments.

Colour-coding data enabled us to see fairly quickly and easily the amount of material relating to particular code descriptors and to identify the categories that represented the ideas most frequently raised by participants. By examining the amount of colour-coded material we were able to identify the strong themes arising from the data. Our colour-coding system also facilitated the comparison of themes between groups of participants.

I selected particular data extracts to use in our findings by choosing quotations that were representative of the views expressed by participants, thus highlighting the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data. I prioritised the extracts chosen by my co-researchers in preference to my own, as a way of demonstrating

my respect for their work and minimising my bias. Interestingly, the quotations they singled-out often coincided with the ones that had caught my attention whilst I was analysing the data.

Ultimately, any quotation chosen to illustrate a theme over the other possible comments made by participants reflects the researchers' personal preferences to some extent. The extracts selected by my co-researchers and myself epitomised the themes that arose. Furthermore, they did so in ways that elevated them above the various alternatives available because they conveyed the ideas succinctly or poignantly, in our opinions.

I had anticipated that the data provided by students would focus on their experiences in the classroom and especially their judgement regarding teachers' abilities in classroom management. They addressed these issues, but many more besides that I had not expected, including issues relating to peer interactions and concerns about litter and pupils engaging in buying and selling goods. I was surprised to discover that a number of staff, especially support staff, raised these last two issues as well.

I did not anticipate the extent to which relationships are key to the children's perceptions of behaviour. Neither was I prepared for the extent to which the notion of blame appeared in their data or their willingness to 'other' and exclude children who regularly misbehave; these issues will be highlighted in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Findings and Interpretations

‘Blame’ and ‘relationships’ as frameworks for drawing together themes

A wide range of themes emerged from our data. My co-researchers and I recognised the significance of ‘others’ in both students’ and staff’s discussions about challenging behaviour. Both groups referred repeatedly to the role of peers. The pupils cited the part played by teachers in aggravating misbehaviour or preventing it. Both sets of participants highlighted the involvement of parents and the impact that it has on children’s behaviour. In addition elements arose that described the quality of relationships such as respect, listening, attention, fun, boredom, peer pressure, emotions and rejection. The other striking factor that emerged from the data was participants’ focus on other people’s accountability for challenging behaviour. Their discussions around this issue tended to be negative and accusatory.

During the process of examining data in order to identify themes, two concepts emerged that provided a framework for the synthesis of the data that were analysed: ‘blame’ and ‘relationships’. I am conscious of the fact that my co-researchers did not use the term ‘relationships’ in their analysis of the data, but many of the themes they identified connect with it. I am mindful of the fact that my use of the notion of ‘relationships’ reflects me as an individual, as well as a researcher; another researcher may have identified a different framework. Nevertheless, I believe that ‘relationships’ helps to contextualise the themes and emphasises the relevance of them to the daily life of school.

The various groups in our research have engaged in 'bad-mouthing' (Corbett, 1996) others. There was very little evidence of individuals reflecting on their own contributions to indiscipline, with discussions about their own group tending to be impersonal and distanced from themselves.

Analysing and interpreting data

The pupil co-researchers and I analysed the data independently of each other and therefore moved away from the methods adopted in conventional research methodologies where:

'... children's perspectives have been filtered through the interpretations offered by adult researchers' (Coad and Evans, 2008, p.42).

One of the participants in our study referred to teachers' lack of understanding of teenage boys' behaviour and emphasised the importance of actual experience in order to comprehend issues; this he applied not only to others, but also to himself:

'I don't understand about parents act and do things cos like you need that first hand experience cos its like you can't fully understand things until you are it ... you probably do understand things, but not fully' (Interview, Year 10 student).

This young person has grasped a point that some researchers seemed to have missed. Others, on the other hand, have recognised the significance of children's perspectives and insights into the circumstance of their own lives (Christensen and

James, 2008; Jones, 2004; Coad and Evans, 2008). Jones (2004) makes this point vividly in her exposition of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) research into child labour. She describes the events at a conference convened to discuss the findings of international studies on child labour:

'...delegates were disturbed by the scale of dangerous work being undertaken by children and sought to establish consensus on the abolition of all forms of child labour. While children present at the conference did not disagree with the information presented, their views about what these findings meant were influenced by their perspectives as child labourers and differed in fundamental ways from the adults. Children did not accept that work was necessarily negative or exploitative. For many of them their contributions were important for the survival of the family' (p.126).

Consequently, the children recommended regulation rather than abolition and the ILO professed its belief that:

'... unless children are involved in interpreting findings then action arising out of research may result in more harm than good' (p.127).

I share this belief and consequently my student co-researchers have taken a major role in interpreting the findings of this study. Furthermore, as will be explained in Chapter Five, pupils and staff have been asked what action should follow as a result of these findings, and their views are highlighted as they reflect on the implications for school policy and practice.

In their summary report on student views (Appendix 7), my co-researchers commented:

'We found many different themes on why students misbehave. ... The main themes that we found were: boring/distracted, to be popular/peer pressure/"big", wrong groups/bullying and to gain attention. We also found some minor themes that didn't come up as often. They were: to take advantage of the teachers/teachers not strict enough, not caring/certain subjects misbehave in, issues at home/little or no support from parents/no guidance/the teachers avoid them, and influence from video games/18+/other bad influences i.e. happy slapping'.

In their summary report on staff views (Appendix 8), they list the main themes as:

'Boredom from students/laziness, upbringing/home life (parents fault), wanting to look good in front of peers, lack of interest, not understanding work, lack of work and lack of teaching skill/discipline'.

They observed in this report that:

'We didn't find any minor themes in the teachers' questionnaires as we did in the student's ones. The teachers more or less thought the same thing as each other'.

When I read the summary reports prepared by the co-researchers, I was especially struck by three points. Firstly, I immediately recognised the themes identified by them as they had also arisen in the data I had analysed. Secondly, the weight given to particular themes identified by the co-researchers, for example boredom, the influence of peers and attention, resonated with the significance they warranted in the data I had examined. However, I had identified particular themes as more significant, notably those relating to teachers' skills in engaging pupils in their learning and in managing their behaviour. This point will be explored later in this

chapter. Thirdly, the co-researchers had highlighted a range of factors from the data, as I had also done, that shed light upon the causes of problem behaviour. The vast majority of participants, both pupils and staff, identified a number of factors when sharing their thoughts about behaviour. A year 11 pupil observed in response to the first item on the questionnaire: Why do you think students misbehave?:

‘... really this question can get thousands of different answers, because it all depends on the persons’ perception on misbehaviour’.

The point made by this perceptive young man will be evident as this chapter develops. The co-researchers offered a richer, more multi-faceted understanding of behaviour than is apparent in some of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

The vast majority of themes that both the co-researchers and I identified reflected each other’s understanding of the data collected. However, I have identified three themes that my co-researchers did not refer to in their analysis of the questionnaires they examined, namely ‘emotions and feelings’, ‘othering’ and ‘play’. Although my co-researchers include a quotation from a student questionnaire in one of the reports they compiled that infers the pupils’ dislike of teachers’ negative attitudes, they do not specifically refer to the concept of emotion:

‘Another student thinks that the reason students misbehave is because “teachers are too big-headed and egotistical” and that their “attitude towards us is horrible” (Co-researchers’ summary of findings from pupil questionnaires – Appendix 7).

Two points arise when I reflect on this mismatch. Firstly, the references to feelings arose predominantly in data that the co-researchers did not analyse due to time constraints, notably the written reflections produced by students and in the contexts of interviews and focus groups. Secondly, my personal life experiences, as well as my training in counselling skills, may have alerted me to this theme. I alone have used the term 'othering' and exclusion to describe a theme that emerged from the data I analysed. My co-researchers also note the pattern of references to both students and staff seeking the exclusion of misbehaving pupils in a variety of forms:

'... students ... want the students misbehaving to be removed from lessons, or school completely' (Co-researchers' recommendations to SLT – Appendix 9).

'... move students away from friends/exclude or expel them' (Co-researchers' summary of findings from pupil questionnaires – Appendix 7).

My co-researchers do not use the term 'othering', but neither would I if I had not been alerted to it by my initial study feedback and by my subsequent search of the relevant literature. Nevertheless, the co-researchers have highlighted quotations from both student and staff questionnaires that could be interpreted as relating to this theme:

'An example given by a student is for teachers that focus on the good students/achievers. This student says "help the kids who want to learn"' (Co-researchers' summary of findings from pupil questionnaires – Appendix 7).

'An example given by one of the members of staff is for the teachers to work with and focus their attention on the students who try hard. "We pay more attention to the pupils who try hard"' (Co-researchers' summary of findings from staff questionnaires – Appendix 8).

The co-researchers do not refer explicitly or implicitly to the theme of 'play' that emerged from the data I examined. However, the co-researchers participated in a group interview and discussed situations where pupils misbehave. The tenor of these discussions centred around misbehaviour as 'messaging around' with friends or joining in with peers who are 'mucking about'. I have interpreted this information, along with other student data, as misbehaviour being playful rather than malicious. My co-researchers identified themselves with this playful, off-task behaviour and did not present misbehaviour as serious or threatening.

The following exploration of the themes arising from the data gathered will shed light on the first three research questions (pp.12-14). The fourth research question (p.14) will be explored in Chapter Five.

Hands up if you blame the teachers!

Teachers were made accountable for pupil misbehaviour by students, teachers higher up in the school's hierarchy and support staff. Blame was attributed to teachers on the basis of their pedagogical and behaviour management skills, as well as their abilities to relate to children.

Pupils raise their hands

In response to the question: 'Why do you think pupils misbehave?' (Appendix 3), many pupils referred to issues relating to teachers' skills in controlling pupils and their ability to teach effectively, including making lessons interesting and engaging and offering appropriate support to pupils. Thus, they held teachers accountable for classroom behaviour. Pupils frequently referred to teachers' delivery of lessons and many highlighted the issue of boredom.

The theme of boredom was prominent in both my co-researchers' analysis of the questionnaires they surveyed and the wider range of material I examined. The co-researchers wrote in their summary report (Appendix 7) on pupil responses:

'We found that students can misbehave mainly because of boredom or being distracted. In one example someone has said "they misbehave because they are bored". Boredom is the main theme that makes students misbehave'.

The co-researchers and I also noted from the data that students thought that making lessons more engaging would alleviate problem behaviour. The co-researchers wrote in their summary report on pupil responses:

'... make lessons more interesting so that students don't get bored'.

I noted from student data that I analysed that pupils also referred to the idea of making lessons fun, as well as interesting. In response to the question: 'What

action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?' a year 11 student on the extended day programme wrote in his final term at the school:

'Makeing lessons more fun and interesting and making sure everyone understands' (Questionnaire).

The extended day programme was an initiative introduced for a group of year eleven pupils considered by staff to be significantly and persistently challenging. This alternative provision meant that these students were not in school during normal hours, but had lessons after the official end of the school day.

The notion of ensuring that lessons are engaging, enjoyable and accessible was a recurring theme in the student data across all year groups. In response to the same question mentioned above, a year seven student wrote towards the end of his first term at secondary school:

'Make the leasons Better! They are rubbish I might as well be asleep' (Questionnaire).

Although many of the pupils referred to the notion of making lessons more fun, they did not lose sight of the essential purpose of a lesson:

'Teachers such as Mrs [teacher's name] in [subject] have no control what so ever and instead have replaced work for film and computer rooms' (Questionnaire - Year 10 student).

This study confirms earlier research findings (Woods, 1990; De Pear, 1997; Pomeroy, 1999) which indicate that most students want to learn and experience success in school; in fact, all the pupils participating in this study expressed a commitment to the importance of learning. A year eleven pupil, who had been

subject to the severest of school sanctions on many occasions, wrote about this in his 'Reflection on Behaviour':

'If students are not well mannered or behaving in the appropriate way with the right attitude to learn this could result to not achieving to the best of their ability'.

Not only does he see the importance of learning for the individual, he also recognises the importance of learning for others; he continues by writing:

'Misbehaving in school has a big affect on other pupils in the classroom because a student that is always misbehaving is disrupting the learning of other pupils'.

There is a wealth of evidence in the literature that attests to the appreciation pupils have for teachers who endeavour to teach in ways that they find interesting and effective (Woods, 1990; Nieto, 1994; Wallace, 1996; Pomeroy, 1999). This desire for learning opportunities that engage pupils and lead to productive outcomes is evident in research studies involving pupils in mainstream classes in mainstream schools, both primary (Lyons and O'Connor, 2006) and secondary (Araújo, 2005), as well as pupils labelled as having Emotional Social Behavioural Difficulties (ESBD) attending inclusion centres within mainstream schools (Preece and Timmins, 2004) and students excluded from school and under the supervision of Pupil Referral Services (Tranter and Palin, 2004). Interestingly, Turner (2003) observes that teachers can take a different view regarding the link between teaching techniques and behaviour by:

'... using "safe" teaching styles (to avoid losing class control) whilst simultaneously losing pupil interest' (p.14).

Students also emphasised the role of teachers in matters of discipline and saw the teacher as instrumental in stopping misbehaviour. Two year ten pupils' questionnaire replies illustrate this point:

'Punishment is key. If an act of misbehaviour goes unchallenged, the pupil will inevitably see weakness in the teacher and exploit these traits. Meaning, the pupil must suffer some sort of consequence in order to take the teacher seriously'.

The second pupil makes the same point and makes a further statement about what should happen if teachers fail to do this:

'The teachers needs to enforce the rules assertively with no lenience and the weak teachers need to be taken out of this system and replaced with competent teachers not wishy washy one's'.

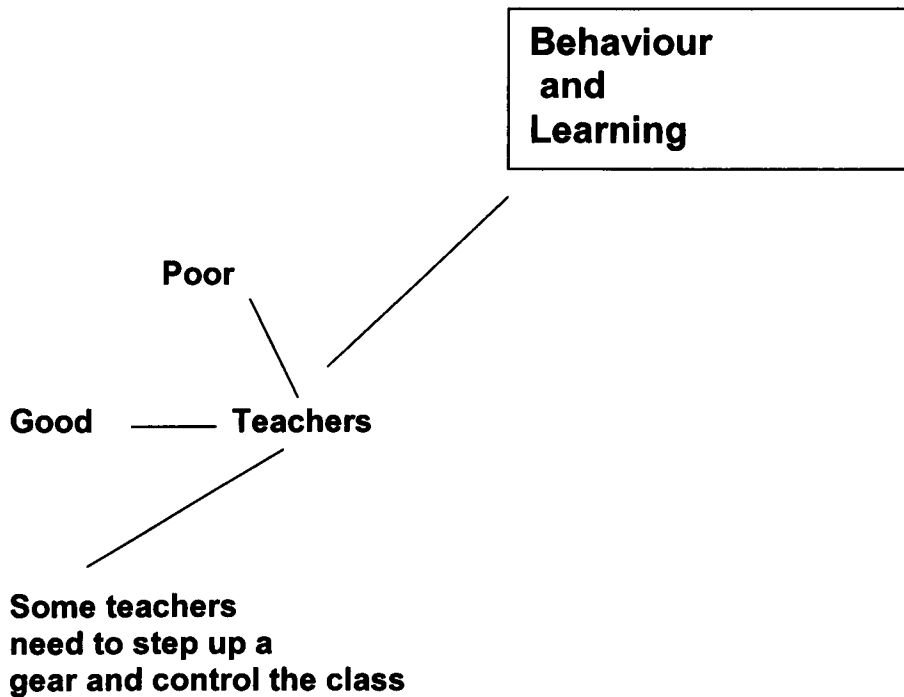
Although my co-researchers identified:

'... to take advantage of the teachers/teachers not strict enough' (Co-researchers' summary of findings from pupil questionnaires – Appendix 7)

as a minor theme in the questionnaires they analysed, I discovered it was a major theme in the data that I examined as it featured prominently in the full set of student questionnaires, the activities pupils engaged in prior to interviews and in the interviews themselves, both those conducted by me and those involving only student participants and co-researchers. Two examples from 'conforming' students illustrate this point: in his reflection on behaviour, written as a preliminary activity before taking part in a peer interview, a year ten pupil observed:

'... people act differently around different teachers. To some teachers, people listen to, respect them and keep quiet when they ask for it and for other teachers, will do the complete opposite and mess around and talk out'.

A year eleven pupil also included this idea on his spider diagram:



Repeatedly, the issue of respect for teachers was raised by students and is inextricably connected with their classroom behaviour management. A year ten pupil observed during a group interview conducted by a student researcher:

'I think the reason why bad behaviour in class keeps on coming up all the time is, some students don't have the respect for some teachers ... On the first day the teacher comes, you need to have ... control over the class'.

Two issues arise from these observations in relation to the existing literature on challenging behaviour. Firstly, as is the case with the pupils in this research, other studies have noted that students attribute the causes of misbehaviour to their teachers. Woods' (1990) work highlights the importance of the ability to teach and keep order in the estimation of students. More recently, Verkuyten (2002) describes how students justify their behaviour and impose accountability on their

teachers by defining disruptive behaviour in relation to schoolwork, claims about normality and by making use of common understandings of teachers' professional identity. Secondly, this study, whilst confirming the observations made by Verkuyten with regard to students attributing misbehaviour to teachers' inadequacies and their abilities to teach and keep order, also offers something further. The extracts which Verkuyten presents focus on the perspectives of pupils whose behaviour has been identified as challenging:

'He [teacher] just can't keep order. He's not got any authority. Nobody listens to anything he says' (p.115).

'I got sent out ... I was talking, but so were tons of people ... the whole class was talking' (p.116).

Both these pupils were sent out of class and claim that they have been singled out in classes where everyone was failing to comply. However, Verkuyten does not present the views of other pupils in the class. Our study presents the views of pupils who have been excluded from class as well as those who have never experienced that sanction and are generally considered by staff to be well-behaved. *Both* groups of pupils confirm that in certain classes everyone behaves, whilst in other classes 'everyone messes around', and the deciding factor, according to these pupils, is the teacher's ability to keep control.

Although other studies, (Pomeroy, 1999; Macleod, 2006) document pupils' perspectives regarding teachers' responsibility for student misbehaviour, having solicited the views of pupils who have been identified as significantly disruptive, there is scant research into the perspective of those who are not considered by school authorities to be challenging. Our study demonstrates consistency across

both groups of students with regard to the part the teacher plays in creating the circumstances in which pupil indiscipline occurs and they most certainly see teachers as *producers* of indiscipline. This finding accords with the results of Araújo's (2005) study. She noted that pupils believed that poor teaching, including providing insufficient work or guidance, uninteresting lessons and inability to control the class had the potential for:

'... providing the conditions in which indiscipline would breed'
(p.255).

As is the case in this study, the pupils in Araújo's research, both the *disrupted* and the *disruptive*:

'... tended to prefer stricter teachers who could control the
class' (ibid., p.255).

Our study would appear to refute the views expressed by teachers in Axup and Gersch's (2008) small-scale study of teachers' attitudes regarding the impact of student behaviour on their professional lives. Having analysed the answers teachers gave in response to the open-ended questions on their questionnaire, the authors observe:

'Textual comments suggested that challenging behaviour
was not perceived as a personal attack ... The teachers'
feelings were being explored here, and the findings cannot
be confirmed in terms of actual student behaviour or
experience without external verification' (p.148).

Within the context of our study, pupils acknowledge that they misbehave for some teachers, specifically those that they consider to fall below their expectations in terms of their abilities to teach effectively and to maintain order. It could be inferred that pupils' misbehaviour for those particular teachers presents a personal attack, in the sense of criticism, as a result of teachers' perceived lack of professional competency.

Relationships between students and teachers matter and although a teacher's ability to control a class was extremely important in the student data, pupils also expressed their desire for a positive relationship with their teachers. Being strict by itself could lead to pupils disliking a teacher's attitude to his or her students. Pupils want their teachers to be able to control their pupils, make lessons stimulating and have a constructive relationship with them. A year ten pupil summed this up by saying:

'Mr [name of teacher] ... he's also got that strictness about him, if the joke goes too far and the work isn't done that's when he punishes you, that's when he comes strict. I, I think he has a very, very good balance.... I think he has a perfect balance to keep the lesson enjoyable for everyone and everyone respects him. You can see it as he walks in the room'.

Pupils also referred to aspects of teachers' behaviour that they disliked and which they thought contributed to pupils' misbehaviour:

'... because teachers sometimes dont want to help so they [pupils] misbehave. And also the teachers sometimes blank you if you have your hand up and it make you feel like you dont like the lesson'
(Questionnaire - Year 7 student).

A year eleven student stressed the importance of how teachers relate to pupils. In his journal that he had kept for a day, he wrote a concluding remark in capital letters:

**'IF A TEACHER IS SAFE WITH YOU, THE STUDENT
WILL SHOW RESPECT BACK, GUARANTEE'.**

He expanded on this point during an interview with me, when I asked him what 'safe' means:

"Like, if they're alright with you, they let you get away with some things, ... but you got a line, they won't let you go over it. If you want to have a laugh and a joke they will joke with you, but then if you push that too far then it gets like, they'll have a word with you and that. But if they're alright with you you'll definitely be alright with them, you've got respect for them because they're not nagging you and shouting at you constantly. ... I'd respect anyone that showed respect to me, definitely'.

These views confirm the findings of previous studies which have highlighted that negative relationships between teachers and students can cause indiscipline (Miller *et al.*, 2000; Wise and Upton, 1998; Pomeroy, 1999). The students who participated in these three studies, as well as those contributing to ours, have a valuable message to share with educationalists. The quality of the relationship between teachers and students has a significant impact on pupils' behaviour. Teachers shape the emotional climate in their classrooms and around school generally, and in turn they contribute significantly to children's behaviour.

Senior leaders raise their hands

The importance of interesting and effective pedagogy is apparent in the school's policies on behaviour and teaching and learning. The behaviour policy, as with all school policies, emanates from the senior leadership and states:

'We believe that within the classroom the prime instrument of good order is the setting of planned, relevant well resourced and interesting tasks differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils'.

The teaching and learning policy asserts:

'Activities should be varied, purposeful and appropriate to meet the needs of all students ... students must have the opportunity to work in a variety of ways, such as individually, in pairs, small groups, whole class situations'.

It would appear that key school policies consider teachers to be responsible for ensuring that lessons are stimulating, and by doing so:

'... disruptive behaviour should be kept to a minimum'
(Behaviour Policy).

I noticed from the data I analysed that teachers with experience at senior leadership level and those in middle management with pastoral responsibilities recognised teachers' accountabilities by linking behaviour with pedagogy. Two middle managers wrote, in response to the question: 'Why do you think students misbehave?':

'If the lesson is boring! This can be caused to a slow pace or not enough work. If resources are over used – this can also be a factor' (Questionnaire).

‘Boredom – usually as a consequence of what they perceive to be an irrelevant lesson – often due to poor teacher prep/ineptitude’ (Questionnaire).

In an interview, a third middle manager commented:

‘Part and parcel of good behaviour is children learning and having fun. If they think they’re getting something out of it they tend to be on task and behave well’.

A senior leader stated:

‘In my view one of the key issues in tackling behaviour is to make sure that lessons are well planned, teaching is engaging with the students, students have learned and the teacher has that relationship, not a buddy buddy relationship, a professional relationship and that comes with a well planned teacher. ... Where you have the difficulties is where the lessons are boring, they lack pace, they lack interest or you’ve got a person, a relationship with that member of staff, can’t relate to the kids’ (Interview).

The less experienced teachers participating in the study did not refer to the idea of misbehaviour stemming from teachers’ skills in making learning relevant and interesting. Instead they referred to factors emanating from beyond the confines of their classrooms such as family background, policy decisions made at senior leadership level and their shortcomings in practice, as well as government initiatives.

Other researchers (Evans, 1999; Araújo, 2005; Lyons and O’Connor, 2006) have noted teachers’ tendencies to look beyond themselves in order to account for pupil indiscipline. Whilst this study confirms the findings of these researchers, it has identified a difference amongst the views of teachers that has not been noted in the literature that I have surveyed. Views regarding the pivotal role of teachers as

preventing or, indeed, instigating indiscipline within classrooms were prevalent in the data gathered from senior leaders and middle managers with pastoral responsibilities. These higher ranking teachers noted the role the teacher plays in the manifestation of misbehaviour as a result of pedagogy.

A comment made by Evans (1999) supports this finding:

‘The school must continue to develop a culture where behaviour management is each teacher’s responsibility and not the domain of a handful of “specialist” staff’ (p.35).

This comment struck me because it appeared to be his view as a head of year, and yet is in direct opposition to the findings of his study: the majority of teachers in his study, twenty nine out of thirty six, believe that resolving disruptive behaviour is not a central concern for their profession.

I was intrigued by this observation and have pondered the possible reasons for these different perspectives. I surmised that the higher ranking teachers are in a position to survey what happens in classrooms across the school as a result of lesson observations they conduct and tours of the school they regularly make, as well as their dealings with pupils on issues relating to behaviour. Teachers whose roles revolve solely around classroom teaching are not, generally, in a position to view other teachers’ day-to-day work and therefore cannot directly compare their work to other teachers’. Children, on the other hand, *are* in that position and in this study they have spoken extensively about teachers’ responsibility for behaviour as a result of their abilities to make learning vibrant and meaningful and to control

pupils. Similarly, teaching assistants work in a variety of classrooms and they too feel in a position to attribute behaviour to teachers.

Teaching assistants raise their hands

The issue of pupils' behaviour varying in class in relation to the teacher taking the lesson arose during the teaching assistants' focus group. There was general consensus amongst this particular group that pupils' behaviour in lessons was determined by the teacher. The following comments highlight this trend:

Key: TA = teaching assistant

- | | |
|-----|--|
| TA1 | 'We sit in a classroom, the kids do not behave any differently when we're in a room |
| TA2 | Mm, that's true |
| TA1 | so we can go from being in Mr [teacher's name] room and they completely behave, they're lovely, and then you go in someone else's room and the same lot of kids completely misbehave. |
| TA3 | For some teachers, yes they do seem to behave well, but as somebody said earlier you go with the same group from one lesson to another lesson and you can have a really productive lesson with a group of boys and you can go with exactly the same group of boys and |
| TA4 | it's a riot |
| TA3 | it's a riot'. |

This group of support staff believed that consistency is the key to behaviour:

'... all staff should ... have the same rules and follow the same rules' (TA focus group).

They saw teachers as compromising this:

'They [teachers] might have the same rules, but they don't put them into force in the same way as other teachers ... You've got some strong teachers and not so strong teachers' (TA focus group).

TAs highlight the lack of commitment from teachers regarding discipline. The following comments from the TA focus group illustrate this:

‘The rules here, they [teachers] sort of move the goal posts ... because sometimes teachers just wanna get through the day’.

‘... they’re following their own rules so whatever suits them in their classroom, if it gets them an easy day and they’re not getting grief or abuse from the children’.

‘Do you not just think teachers might just want an easy life?’

‘... some of the teachers can’t be bothered to do detentions’.

TAs were unequivocal in blaming teachers for pupils’ misbehaviour in lessons and their culpability was consistently referred to in all three forms of data collection used with TAs in our study, in the focus group, individual interviews and personal reflections.

Other support staff raise their hands

Members of support staff working beyond the classroom also implicated teachers in pupils’ indiscipline. This group comprised of pastoral support staff, including learning mentors and members of the non-classroom based support staff (cleaning/catering and caretaking staff). In response to the question: ‘Why do you think students misbehave?’ a member of the non-classroom based support staff responded:

‘Lack of discipline from teachers and children no that they can get away with it’ (Questionnaire).

In answer to the same question, a learning mentor noted:

- ‘ . No firm margins/expectations from staff.**
- . Inconsistency in discipline and expectations by staff’.**

whilst another wrote:

- ‘ . School Code of Conduct/Behavioural Policy not adhered to as staff do not implement these policies.**
- . Student’s perception “No consequences to their inappropriate behaviour.” Therefore can continue to misbehave’.**

During an interview, a member of the non-classroom based support staff commented:

‘...kids need to know where they are with teachers ... what you can and what you can’t get away with. ...They need to have that line, but at the moment we don’t seem to have it. ... we haven’t got that fear factor any more, you know and that’s what we’re lacking ... we just seem to now sweep problems under the carpet’.

Replying to another question: ‘What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?’ a learning mentor placed teachers at the forefront by stating:

‘Interesting lessons/well prepared’ (Questionnaire).

Another learning mentor blamed students’ misbehaviour on some teachers’ inability to relate to children:

‘... you’ve got staff that don’t know how to deal with the kids, probably because they’ve never had kids before, they don’t know how to deal with the kids ... don’t like kids but they’re working with kids and just can’t cope with a child *being* a child’ (Interview).

A member of the pastoral support team observed:

‘... swearing in corridors, you actually hear it with teachers present and it’s let go ... real fighting, I think sometimes that is let go as well ... I think teachers are so busy that they mean to do something about it ... a bit of bullying and I think it’s let go’ (Interview).

Our study has discovered that support staff hold teachers culpable for pupils’ behaviour. They present a different picture of teachers to the one identified by Araújo (2005) as arising from official government discourses in which:

‘... teachers are mainly presented as its [indiscipline] *victims*’
(p. 246).

Hands up if you blame the senior leadership team!

Teachers raise their hands

Teachers blamed pupil indiscipline on factors other than themselves. When discussing school related factors, they blamed the senior leadership team. Their criticisms centred around the idea of SLT setting the tone for expectations regarding behaviour and being visible around the school to enforce those expectations. In response to the question: ‘Why do you think students misbehave?’ a middle manager responded:

‘Ethos of school as set by Headteacher – if he remains in his/her office, does not exclude when it should be done’ (Questionnaire. This participant underlined the words ‘when’ and ‘should’. The co-researchers and I understood this underlining to indicate emphasis).

Other members of staff cited involvement of the SLT in their answers to the question: ‘What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?’. For example:

‘Strong leadership from the very top. Zero tolerance approach in a blitz resulting in severest sanctions. A message needs to be sent throughout the school that misbehaviour should not be tolerated by targeting those persistent offenders, handing out severe and meaningful sanctions and making it clear to others that this is occurring’ (Questionnaire - Staff – anonymous).

Although a few pupils and some support staff referred to the role of SLT in pupil behaviour, their views did not rate the involvement of senior teachers as significantly as teachers did. Their focus was much more on how the classroom teacher manages the learning and behaviour of pupils in their classroom. This point reflects the findings of a study conducted by Watkins and Wagner (2000), which examined one thousand secondary schools that were considered to have reduced the incidence of challenging behaviour. The authors concluded that these schools shared common characteristics, including two which are of particular relevance to the findings of our study. Firstly, teachers in these schools dealt with most of the everyday discipline issues themselves. This feature corresponds with the belief expressed by pupils, support staff and higher ranking teachers in this research regarding the pivotal importance of classroom teachers in addressing misbehaviour. Secondly, the headteachers had an eminently influential role in shaping the cultures of these schools and again this factor is identified by teachers in our research.

The teachers in Araújo's (2005) study also identified the significance of the school's leadership and management team and were aware of the different approaches taken with regard to discipline between the previous and current regimes. They were supportive of the present administration, given that they believed it was:

‘... leading to significant changes in pupils’ behaviour. In particular, it was suggested that establishing clearer and stricter boundaries of conduct and resorting more often to exclusion had improved pupils’ behaviour in the school’
(p.255).

Hands up if you blame the parents!

Staff raise their hands

The role of parents in pupils’ misbehaviour featured prominently in staff data and also appeared in student data, but to a far lesser extent. Parents’ roles were perceived both in a positive and negative light by staff, regardless of length of time served in schools or position within the hierarchy. Very few pupils referred to parents in a disparaging way, whereas a significant proportion of staff did. For example, in response to the questionnaire item: ‘Why do you think students misbehave?’ a member of staff wrote:

‘Their parents haven’t taught them how to behave, probably because the parents don’t know how to behave either’ (Questionnaire – anonymous).

During an interview a member of the non-classroom based support staff commented:

‘These lads ... will never ever admit to anything unless you’ve caught that boy bang to rights doing whatever you’re talking of, they will never ever admit it because that’s how they’re brought up’.

Similarly, a deficit perception of parents was also evident in an interview with a newly qualified teacher:

‘Well, some parents are just useless, I phoned [name of child]’s parents last night because he didn’t turn up for detention and his mum said something about ‘Yeah but I can only tell him, if he doesn’t want to do it there’s not much I can do’, if you’re his parent and you claim there’s not much you can do what can a teacher do then? And because they have such lousy parents I think it’s the school’s responsibility to kind of enforce that discipline’.

This trend is also evident in previous research. Both Araújo (2005) and Lyons and O’Connor (2006) found that teachers in their studies make parents accountable for pupils’ indiscipline. Araújo discovered that:

‘Some teachers saw indiscipline as emerging from a conflict between expectations of behaviour at the home and at the school. In their discourses, the home is presented as a permissive environment that contrasts with the disciplined system promoted by the school’ (p.253).

This finding also features in Lyons and O'Connor's research, as it has in ours. Lyons and O'Connor noted that teachers believed that the values of parents differed from those of school and even though they conceded that a small proportion of parents were:

'... unsupportive ... their perception of this minority appeared to dominate their discourse about the cause of challenging behaviour' (p.224).

Some teachers participating in our study attributed pupils' misbehaviour to parents being too strict. This view was directed at certain ethnic minority families and this reflects a pattern Araújo (2005) noted in her study:

'In the eyes of the teachers, ethnic minority pupils were, for instance, repressed at home' (p.253).

A senior teacher in our study observed during an interview with me:

'I think black African parents have a very high regard for a good education, and from bitter experience they know that to make it in the world, to make it in a new country, they have to use all available tools. And I think the parental pressure for that growing body of kids ... is very strong, because those parents have known what it's like to live in poverty, known what it's like to live where education, opportunities are limited ... There's this massive gift horse and they want to make the most of it and they are very, very clear, have very high expectations... that could be one of the reasons why sometimes black African behaviour is a concern, because it's a reaction to the very strict and high expectations of home'.

Contacting and working with parents was suggested by both staff and pupils as a way of addressing pupils' misbehaviour, but there were subtle differences between

these groups. Often staff, both teaching and support, suggested involving parents in the resolution of behaviour problems as way of making them not only aware of problems, but also accountable for dealing with them:

‘Parents informed and asked to take some responsibility for their son’ (Questionnaire - Staff – anonymous).

‘... in Year 7 if the kid was swearing ... get that parent in ... and if it means getting that parent in 5 times in one month ...’ (TA focus group).

Some staff viewed involving parents in a more constructive light, but this represents the minority view:

‘... Contacting parents you often find they’re very supportive and they want to know how their children are getting on’ (Middle manager – interview).

However, this positive view was shared by pupils:

‘Most actions teachers and staff do to stop a student don’t work 60% of the time, but through my own experiences, a phone call home straight to the parent can change the child’s attitude because the parent can give a good telling off’ (Questionnaire - Year 10 student).

Hands up if you blame the pupils!

Both staff and pupils raise their hands

Making pupils accountable for indiscipline took two forms in this study. Firstly, it was related to the notion of 'within-child' factors (Galloway *et al.*, 1994; Watkins and Wagner, 2000), in other words, misbehaviour stems from the child. Macleod's (2006) work on understanding 'constructions of young people in trouble' (p.155) as *bad* or *mad* sheds light on this approach to comprehending misbehaviour. She argues that young people are rendered 'bad' as a result of:

'... perspectives which lay the finger of blame on individual deficits' (p.159)

and 'mad' as a consequence of the discourse that views troubling behaviour as a medical condition, and therefore, defines pupils as having:

'... some kind of disorder' (ibid. p.159).

Secondly, pupils' relationships with each other were also implicated in data provided by both students and staff.

'Within-child' factors

Half of the questionnaires completed by staff cited issues relating to pupils' personal faults in their considerations of student indiscipline:

'Not enough interest in personal learning' (Middle manager).

- **Attention seeking**
- **Lazy** (NQT).

‘... disaffected’ (Middle manager).

‘Can’t do therefore won’t do’ (Learning mentor).

‘... want to rebel ... fear of failure ... learning difficulties’
(Anonymous).

‘Poor self-esteem and low expectations (of students)’
(Specialist teacher).

During an interview, a member of the non-classroom based support staff observed:

‘I think there are boys that simply don’t want to learn for whatever reason, whether it’s that they can’t learn, have got a bad house, bad things indoors’.

A newly qualified teacher commented on the fact that the majority of pupils were polite and friendly, but added that:

‘... probably, actually it is the minority that are just a bit silly and it’s probably even a smaller minority that have got this real nasty behaviours in them’ (Interview).

There is a wealth of material in the literature that attributes misbehaviour to ‘within-child’ factors. Some pupils referred to students’ individual deficits, but not on the scale evident in staff data. Whilst they noted:

‘... they feel lazy and cant be bothered’ (Questionnaire - Year 11 student)

they emphasised the significance of relationships between pupils, rather than individual deficits, when making pupils accountable for indiscipline.

Students' recognition of 'within-child' factors influencing pupils' behaviour is evident in the literature but, as in this study, does not assume the dominance that adult views on this issue does.

Relationships with peers

Staff and students recognised that peer relationships affect pupil behaviour. Pupils frequently referred to the idea of seeking attention from friends and peers in ways related to having fun and having a laugh, showing off and conveying an image to impress peers. Pupils used terms such as 'cool', 'hard', 'big', 'joker', 'bad man' and 'gangsta' to describe this phenomenon. They also referred to the idea of pupils misbehaving in order to avoid being seen as a 'neek' or 'geek':

'I think they might misbehave because their friends are in the same class, so they are trying to get a laugh by showing off' (Questionnaire - Year 7 student).

'Yeah one boy's smoking ... I thought he was a fool cos it was almost like he didn't wanna smoke. It was because he was trying to look the hard man in front of his friends cos he made it clear to his friends he was lighting the cigarette cos he went to do it, realised no one was looking and he waited, once someone turned around that's when he lit it. It was almost he was like a wannabe, a fool cos he was basically just showing off in front of his mates' (Interview - Year 10 student).

Three pupils discussed a teacher whom they consider has control over his classes and yet they recognised that children misbehaved in his classroom at times:

- Pupil 1 **'Like, for example, Mr [name of teacher] has total control of the class**
- Pupil 2 **Yeah**
- Pupil 1 **cos everyone's scared of him**
- Pupil 2 **and Mr [name of second teacher]**
- Pupil 3 **Yeah and so there is no bad behaviour, only when they go**

	out to talk to someone, everyone goes mad
Pupil 1	Yeah
Pupil 3	they just go mad and chuck stuff
Pupil 2	Exactly as soon as the teacher steps out of the class, its chaos'.

One of the children engaged in this exchange, subsequently took part in a one to one unstructured interview with me. The pupil's drawing was used as a stimulus for the interview, and he made the point that at times everyone, including 'good children', may 'start mucking around' if they have a supply teacher, or if their own teacher 'steps out of the room' .To explain why 'good children' 'start mucking around' he ventured:

'I think it's to make other kids not think that they're ... geeks ... So they kind of go along with what the naughty kids are doing'.

A year eleven pupil, who had experienced a range of sanctions in response to several breaches of the school's code of conduct, also referred to the idea of students joining in with bad behaviour and highlighted the role of playful interactions between students:

Pupil	'Yeah cos like someone in my class, cos like [name of pupil], ... he used to pratt around yeah, so like he's my friend as well like so I used to get sucked in, I used to get sucked in then started messing about with him as well ... so, sort of like that was like disrupting others, then others in the class would see us and start joining in as well.
Adult researcher	OK. Erm, so although you were mucking about and getting sucked in with [name of pupil] and then others would be following on with you two, were you conscious at the same time that that was affecting your learning?
Pupil	nah
Adult researcher	You didn't think of that?
Pupil	Didn't think of it
Adult	Alright, OK, and why do you think you didn't

researcher
Pupil

**really think about it?
Cos just too busy playing about (laughs)'.**

In addition to drawing attention to the influence of friends and peers in pupils' classroom behaviour, it is interesting that the pupil refers to the behaviour as 'mucking about' and 'playing'. The idea of 'play' was also raised by a year ten pupil in his written reflection and he explicitly notes that teachers may perceive this behaviour differently from pupils:

'... the bad behaviour at [name of school] is extremely over-exaggerated and taken to far for example if I was to punch someone as a joke and a teacher saw what happened they would get me into trouble for fighting which is completely wrong and incorrect ... many teachers fail to understand, they do not understand how we play or bond with each other, which may lead them to take conclusions'.

These extracts emphasise the importance of play for pupils; the students quoted are fifteen and sixteen years old, yet they have used the term 'play'. These quotations suggest the importance for teenagers of socialising with their friends within a 'playful' framework, which the participants often refer to as 'messaging about' or 'mucking around'.

As a teacher, I was surprised by the degree to which 'playful' opportunities are created by pupils in school and this discovery resonated with findings from an ethnographic study undertaken by Punch (2003) in rural Bolivia. Her work explores the everyday lives of these children and how they are able to combine the significant workload they carry out for their family households with school and play:

'In particular they would play on the way to and from school – arriving late at school and blaming their delay on completing chores at home or returning home late and blaming school activities for keeping them back later than usual' (p.289).

Some of the participants in our research referred to the issue of pupils' lateness to lessons. In light of Punch's study, I recognise the pupils' tardiness to class as their creation of chances to socialise and play with friends. Furthermore, their 'mucking around' in classes where they feel teachers have insufficient control or have stepped out of the room, may be part of this same process of creating informal opportunities for play.

Staff also recognised the influence of peers in pupil's misbehaviour, with half of those completing questionnaires citing this factor, as this quotation indicates:

'They also gain credibility with their fellow pupils. 'He's brave' saying that to the teacher or 'he's funny'. The class start laughing – its like being on the stage. The 'buzz' of an audience'.

The impact peer relationships can have on student behaviour is acknowledged in the literature. Preece and Timmins (2004), Araújo (2005) and Lyons and O'Connor (2006) raised the issue of conflicts between peers leading to indiscipline. Less evident is the contribution of playful interactions between peers and how they shape behaviour. Indeed, I have only encountered the work of Munn and Lloyd (2005) in this regard and reference to this is not explicit. I have read into the

quotations from their participants the playful nature of pupils that can get them into trouble with adults:

'It was 'cause I was running about riots and that. I was the class clown. (Katy, Project 3) ...

Kevin's mother (Project 2) ... he was excluded for spitting at a car ... Kevin jumped in the air to pretend that they had run over his foot and Kevin didn't spit at the car' (p.212).

Some students and staff were concerned about pupils buying and selling confectionary and fizzy drinks because they believed that consumption of these goods have an adverse effect on students' behaviour. A year 9 student had included this issue in the series of drawings he produced (Appendix 10). In our subsequent interview, he explained his concern:

'Some people purposely bring in loads of stuff to sell ... many people bring in stuff, loads of people start getting like sugar rushes sometimes and ... sometimes leads to fights'.

Teaching assistants commented:

'The buying and selling ... doughnuts, sweets, crisps ... all the rubbish that I think can lead to the challenging behaviour [several voices in agreement] ... the "E"s' (TA Focus Group).

A small number of staff and some pupils ventured the opinion that misbehaviour is related to the age and stage of development of children:

'Natural part of growing up, for some. ie rebellion'
(Questionnaire - Staff – anonymous).

During an interview between two year eleven students, who were generally considered to be well behaved, the following points were made:

'... if one person starts to mess around in class it provokes other people to mess around. And then the whole class starts to mess around ... that's just kids being kids'.

Nevertheless, students are concerned by the impact that misbehaviour has on their learning, as demonstrated in a peer interview between year seven and year eight students during which they discussed the photographs they had taken:

Pupil 1: **'... why did you decide to take a picture of the music room?**
Pupil 2: **Well in there ... it's very noisy ... people kept shouting and I realised it was from MU2 [next-door classroom] ... there's a certain group of boys who keep shouting ... it disrupts other people learning'.**

Hands up if you blame yourself!

Not a hand in sight

The theme of blame was prevalent in the data, but it was generally related to making others accountable. This trend is also evident in other studies. Pomeroy (1999) found that the pupils she interviewed who had been permanently excluded from mainstream schools:

'Rarely ... comment on the role of their behaviour in conflicts' (p.478).

Evans (1999) and Araújo (2005) found that teachers made others accountable: the pupils themselves, their parents and communities or the school's senior leadership team.

With the exception of one student, no one participating in our study took personal responsibility for indiscipline. Despite the fact that SLT was criticised by teachers, members of the senior leadership team seemed unaware of staff perceptions. One senior leader remarked during an interview with me:

'... the teachers feel supported from, you know, YLCs and senior leadership as well'.

His view contrasted sharply with perceptions of teachers. A middle manager explained that he thought some teachers did not pursue incidents of poor behaviour:

'... because sometimes they feel they haven't been supported ... They may have seen it passed onto other people and when it has been passed on people haven't dealt with it as accordingly as they think they should do ... the point I'm trying to make is maybe they've seen other behaviours higher up the scale have not been dealt with, so therefore why should I deal with this behaviour?' (Interview).

A newly qualified teacher also talked about the issue of some staff not dealing with misbehaviour, preferring instead to pass it on to the year learning coordinator:

'... teachers just passing the buck on to their Head of Year, if a kid doesn't behave in his lesson ... he gets passed a lot of things. Now on the more serious case he passes it up ... but then in a lot of cases it just gets passed down again by [name of senior leader], him in particular' (Interview).

The senior leader mentioned in the last quotation did not refer to the idea of supporting staff personally, but focused on systems:

'... we've got the systems in place ... what I think needs to be done is much more collating of the data'
(Interview).

Only one participant in this study accepted any degree of accountability for misbehaviour and that was a student who had encountered the entire range of disciplinary measures at the school's disposal, with the exception of permanent exclusion. However, he appeared to minimise the seriousness of his actions despite the fact he had been placed on the extended day programme, as this exchange illustrates:

Pupil 1: **'... why do you think you were kicked out?**
Pupil 2: **Because of my behaviour**
Pupil 1: **What type of behaviour?**
Pupil 2: **Just silly stuff'** (Year 11 students – focus group).

Having accepted that the school took action as a result of his behaviour, he appears to minimise the significance of his conduct by describing it as 'just silly stuff'. Later in the discussion, he acknowledges that other factors impacted on his behaviour:

Pupil 3: **'How are your family taking this?**
Pupil 1: **Yeah, do you think that they look at you differently or respect you less, any less or any more in any way?**
Pupil 2: **I think my mum thinks it's a great idea because I'm taken away from certain people that used to get me into trouble'.**

This young man did not dispute his mother's opinion.

Munn and Lloyd (2005) present quotations from young people who have been excluded from mainstream schools in which they accept responsibility for the steps taken by their schools. For example:

‘Well, its my own fault ... I have had so many chances at school that I cannae [cannot] really blame them fur [for] excluding me. (Robert, Project 3)’ (p.212).

The authors note that:

‘... for some commentators this might be interpreted as false consciousness’ (ibid., p.212)

and such an observation might be applied to any or all of the parties participating in our study, but then who decides what is or is not ‘false consciousness’?

The importance of consistency in relationships

Both staff and pupils emphasised the importance of consistency. It was frequently mentioned by staff in response to the question: ‘What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?’:

‘Consistent use of behaviour policy’ (Questionnaire - NQT).

‘Punishment of poor behaviour needs to be consistent and they need to be sanctioned accordingly’ (Questionnaire -Year Learning Coordinator).

‘Consistent rules followed by all staff’ (Questionnaire - Subject teacher).

Other staff contributions on this subject focused on the need for consistency from the senior management team, thus making senior leaders accountable for indiscipline:

'I think we've got too many sanctions which at the moment aren't being followed up to the level that they are or they're being inconsistently given, which leaves staff and pupils not knowing where the boundaries are and not knowing what punishment meets which crime or ... what it would lead to, it could be anything from, I suppose, an official detention up to a fixed term exclusion, but I don't know what would be applied and what circumstances they're applied, because it has been so inconsistent' (Interview - Middle manager).

Support staff and pupils once again put the onus on teachers. In response to the question: 'What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour?' a teaching assistant proposed:

'Consistency of rules in lessons' (Questionnaire).

During the teaching assistants' focus group, the lack of consistency amongst teaching staff was discussed:

'... there's no continuity on anything ... kids need to have it throughout the board if they do things wrong no matter where they are, what classroom they're in, they get punished just the same'.

Pupils also stressed the importance of consistency. Frequently teachers seen as having control of their classes were those who set and kept to parameters, and the children knew they would follow up misbehaviour by punishing pupils:

'I only get in trouble in some classes like when I had Mr [name of teacher] I didn't get into know trouble I was a star but as soon as I moved into Mrs [name of teacher]'s class my behaviour started to get worse ... I don't get in trouble in class with Mrs [name of teacher]

who teaches me drama or Mr [name of teacher] who used to teach me English because they have boundaries and the class respect the teacher' (Written reflection - Year 9 student).

Inconsistency in the application of rules was criticised by pupils as it was seen as unfair and often provoked an emotional response:

'Am not mental believe it or not I can control my self I do get angry because I feel in the [name of the school's inclusion centre] I get treated differently ... I just want to understand why some children in the centre have different rules applied to them ... it gets me upset because I don't understand if they [staff] are picking on me because I have annoyed them or they are picking on me because they don't like me' (Written reflection - Year 9 student).

The literature attests to the importance of consistency regarding behaviour in schools. The Elton Report's (DES, 1989) recommendations emphasise the importance of consistency in promoting good behaviour in schools. Turner (2003) notes the detrimental effect of inconsistency from staff on pupil behaviour as they deviate in practice from the requirements set out in the school's behaviour policy. Araújo (2005) found that pupils' attitudes to discipline were determined by their:

'... perceptions of teachers' fairness and consistency in the application of disciplinary sanctions' (p.256).

Our study confirms the findings of previous studies testifying to the importance of consistency for both pupils and staff. As we will see in Chapter Five, 'consistency' will underpin the answer to our fourth research question concerning the implications of the findings of this study for the development of a collaborative whole school approach to the inclusion of marginalised pupils.

The importance of attention in student-teacher relationships

The importance of teacher attention is evident within the literature. Pomeroy (1999) observes that it is frequently mentioned by pupils in alternative settings as they discuss their experiences in mainstream schools. The pupils in her study valued teachers who offered the support and attention they needed in order to progress, as well as those who listened to pupils. Our study has highlighted the importance students in mainstream attach to the attention they receive from teachers.

However, it also emphasises that perceptions regarding attention from teachers vary quite dramatically and offers a new perspective on this issue as it highlights the complexity of this concept. This issue may not have come to light had it not been for the focus of the third item on the questionnaire composed by one of my student co-researchers. He asked: 'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please give your reasons why.'

This item prompted a wide range of responses. My co-researchers and I found that the idea of attention is not only complex, it is also emotive as it was linked to ideas of fairness and the individual's worth. Furthermore, it was highly subjective, as respondents voiced competing and contradictory opinions:

'I agree with the statement but I think it is right because why should the good students suffer for the ones that don't want anything' (Questionnaire - Year 10 student).

'I disagree! I firmly believe teachers pay more attention to the 'low lifes' of the school and I think this is wrong. I think teachers pay more attention to the naughty or underachieving students for two valid reasons. Firstly, the London challenge rewarded underachievers for just turning up to lessons. Secondly a few underachieving

student are getting rewarded as they are missing lessons to ride motorbikes. I personally think it is ludicrous' (Questionnaire - Year 10 student).

'Disagree – I feel it is the other way we give far more time and support to the disruptive/non-achieving pupil' (Questionnaire - Middle manager).

'Disagree – Most teachers want their pupils to achieve and usually support those who are struggling. Same attention is given to both if pupil is trying, however, negative/unwilling to work attitude can be met with negative attitude to pupil – sent out of room etc... to enable rest of class to learn' (Questionnaire - Teaching assistant)

Despite the wide variation of views about which groups of children receive the most attention, it is clear from this data that pupils want attention from their teachers, but that it is a difficult task for teachers to provide it in a way that is seen as fair to all.

The importance of emotions and feelings in relationships

Another striking feature of the data gathered from both students and staff was the way emotions and feelings were threaded through them. Emotions were cited within the context of relationships between pupils and their teachers, peers or parents:

'I was raging you don't understand I was so angry that I said some horrible things that I regret but I just had to say it to cool me off ... These are the sort of things that get me angry and make my behaviour turn very bad' (Reflection – Year 9 student).

'... he [the teacher] decides to follow you around shouting and winding you up and getting you angry and

stressed and giving it back; getting yourself into more trouble. Some teachers just need to chill' (Diary – Year 11 student).

'Some misbehave ... because they don't like the teacher so they do that to annoy the teachers. Some kids do that to annoy because maybe they have been told off in a unfair way' (Questionnaire - Year 7 student).

'I hate this school now. I wish I didn't wake up sometimes then most people would be better off. The school wouldn't give 2 fucks, they would be happy' (Diary – Year 10 student).

I was disturbed by this latter student's comment and met with him the next day. He explained that he no longer felt like this as the issue that had prompted this reaction had been resolved following a discussion with his form tutor. I explained to him that I was always available and willing to listen and help resolve issues. I asked him to come and see me if he felt troubled. I also told him that I was going to have a word with a colleague of mine, the Child Protection Officer, as I was aware that he had been working with this young man and his mother in light of ongoing concerns. The student accepted this.

The insight this student allowed me impacted upon actions that were subsequently taken. He was enrolled on the school's motivational scheme in the run-up to his GCSEs instead of being placed in the school's inclusion unit. This move appeared to transform his attitude to school. He went on to achieve 7 A*-Cs in his examinations and he and his mother attended the Thanksgiving ceremony held before the examinations started.

Pupils also referred to the emotions their behaviour evoked from their parents and how, in turn, that affected them:

'... They're really angry, they're like proper angry that you're getting excluded ... makes them angry and makes you want to do better and not get excluded ... really upset that your parents are really angry with you, and they don't exactly know what to say to you ... and it gets like you can't really talk to your parents anymore for a period of time' (Interview – Year 9 student).

'I don't like when my parents come into school, ... it does help but I just don't like it ... my mum can actually speak to the teacher face to face and ... she [teacher] can bring up the evidence of what I've done ... she [mum] can look at me and see like what I've done ... and it does hurt' (Interview – Year 9 student).

Feelings were also prominent in peer interviews between three year eleven students on the extended day programme:

Pupil 1: **'So [name of student], how does it make you feel when you're walking into school when all your peers are walking out? How does it make you feel emotionally?**

Pupil 2: **I really feel embarrassed, I really do feel embarrassed'.**

Pupil 1: **'It made me feel quite angry actually, depriving me from my friends, social life'.**

One of the students recalled the meeting when he was told he was being placed on the extended day programme:

'... and the worst thing about it ... they had a meeting with my mum and I never found out about it. On the day, I was working in Art all day, like nearly finishing up some big painting. At the end of the day, then we had our big meeting ... I remember it was Tuesday at about 2 o' clock ... We had a meeting and it just broke my heart'.

The literature contains references to a range of emotions experienced by children and adults in relation to pupil misbehaviour (Preece and Timmins, 2004; Turner, 2003; Pomeroy, 1999; Macleod, 2006; Hayden, 2003). However, these authors

generally mention feelings in the context of discussing other issues, rather than identifying them as a significant element in how challenging behaviour is experienced by various parties. This study acknowledges the power of emotions felt by students whose behaviour is construed as challenging and disruptive and others, staff and pupils, who find misbehaviour hard to tolerate and who discuss issues relating to it in terms redolent with negative emotions. This reaction is evident in another theme to emerge from the data, 'othering' and exclusion.

'Othering' and exclusion as denying and curtailing relationships

I was not particularly surprised by the fact that teachers placed limits on inclusion and wanted to retain permanent exclusion as a last resort given that the literature attests to this trend amongst teachers (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Harvey, 1992), as noted in Chapter Two. Furthermore, having reviewed the official position of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), Hayden (2003) concludes:

'The NUT is more supportive of inclusion when this relates to children with disabilities, the difficulties arise when managing the behaviour of able bodied pupils, although some of these pupils may be viewed as having special educational needs related to their behaviour' (p.636).

The teachers in our study prioritised the needs of the majority of pupils rather than the minority of students whose behaviour causes concern. This was the case

regardless of the length of their professional service, their position in the school's hierarchy and whether their roles had a specialist focus on working with pupils who are considered to exhibit challenging behaviour or a more generalised role as subject teacher:

'I think as long as a child is able to go to a lesson and as long as ... the support is there for the child to access the curriculum, then they should be given a chance to come to a mainstream school ... That said, when a child is unable to function ... when it becomes exclusion for them and when it excludes other people's curriculum at the same time then at that point you have to say "Well this isn't working"' (Interview - Middle manager).

'I think it's a balance between the need of the individual and the need of the rest of the pupils ... Whilst we care very much about the individuals that are disrupting and what is the root of it and what to do about it ... we can't allow that to impact on the huge majority that are behaving appropriately. So I think we do need to look at measures' (Interview - Specialist support teacher).

I was surprised, however, by the views of support staff employed specifically to work with children with special educational needs:

'Every child's got a right to an education, but no child's got a right to stop the other child having an education and this is what a lot of boys who do the disruptive behaviour are doing to the ones that want to learn ... maybe inclusion is not working' (TA focus group).

'Some students, for whatever reason, have no interest in achieving therefore should a teacher continually give time when there are other students who are willing, not necessarily able, to achieve' (Questionnaire - Learning mentor).

Many of the participants who completed the questionnaire referred to the idea of a 'tougher' approach when responding to the question: 'What action can be taken to

stop misbehaviour in school?'. Their suggestions exemplified the theme of 'othering' and exclusion. The following quotations from staff highlight this feature:

'Examples to be made of the worst/most frequent offenders'.

'More shaming and belittling in front of the class. ... If more boys were made fools of in front of their peers I think they would start thinking twice about being stupid'.

'To actually segregate properly, show them they are really being punished and what they did was wrong, detention, more homework, lunch on their own, not with others in canteen'.

These comments not only suggest that teachers baulk at the idea of inclusion for children who display challenging behaviours, but that they think these pupils should be treated harshly and differently from their peers.

Many students, including those who frequently misbehave, also advocated less tolerant treatment of pupils who engage in indiscipline:

'Students who talk and disrupt the lesson should be sent out straight away' (Questionnaire - Year 10 student).

'I think that the students that misbehave all the time should be chucked out of the school for good' (Questionnaire - Year 10 student).

Even a pupil who has been repeatedly internally excluded for breaches of the school's discipline code asserted that:

'I don't think we should have people who behave bad in our school ... if some boys ... don't follow the path they should be internally excluded. Yeah, and if they can't settle in that then they should be kicked out of the school' (Interview - Year 8 student).

Some pupils' responses went beyond the sanctions used by the school and particularly highlighted the idea of 'othering':

'... try to humiliate them like a power point for his year groups assembly about him' (Questionnaire - Year 8 student).

'Bring back the cane or just send them to a behave school so thay can get good' (Questionnaire - Year 7 student).

'I don't think you can stop misbehaviour but why let the people misbehaving ruin our learning so I say put all of the people misbehaving in one class and let the teacher listen to music and stop them from ruining our education they can ruin theres but not mine' (Questionnaire - Year 7 student).

I was particularly struck by their views given the recognition from both groups of students, those who have been internally excluded for breaching the school's discipline code and those who are generally considered to be well behaved, that all children misbehave at times and that indiscipline is directly related to teachers' inabilities to engage children in the learning process by making lessons interesting and purposeful, to manage classroom behaviour effectively or to relate appropriately to their students. I have not encountered this phenomenon in the literature and feel that this study offers new perspectives in this area.

There appears to be a divide between the school's rhetoric about inclusion and valuing the individual, as expressed in its policy on inclusion and its mission statement, and participants' perceptions regarding challenging behaviour and inclusion:

'We believe that all children should be equally valued in school. We will strive to eliminate prejudice and

discrimination, and to develop an environment where all children can flourish and feel safe.

[Name of school] is committed to inclusion. Part of the school's strategic planning for improvement is to develop cultures, policies and practices that include all pupils. We aim to engender a sense of community and belonging' (Inclusion Policy, 2006, p. 1).

'We are distinguished by the quality of education and care extended to all our members. Each person is recognised as an individual, valued, nurtured and enabled to fulfil his or her potential to the highest possible standard' (The School Mission Statement).

How can these worthy aims sit comfortably with the views of staff and pupils which express the desire to punish more harshly, to exclude and even humiliate children? These policies express certain aspirations and ideals that are compatible with the inclusion of marginalised pupils. However, some of the practices that operate in school, both those that are formally promulgated through policies, as well as those that are informally adopted by individual members of staff, counter the inclusion of marginalised pupils.

Traditionally the school's policies have been constructed by the senior leadership team with limited, if any, involvement of staff and no consultation with students. Perhaps it is inevitable that practices develop that contravene the spirit of policies given the process that lead to their formation. The official position advocated by the upper echelons may not reflect the personal views of members of the body it seeks to represent.

Furthermore, anomalies arise between the school's inclusion policy and its behaviour policy:

'... [name of school] is committed to providing an appropriate and high quality education for all our pupils. We believe that all children have a common entitlement to a broad and balanced academic and social curriculum, which is accessible to them, and to be fully included in all aspects of school life ... We believe that educational inclusion is about equal opportunities for all pupils'
(Inclusion Policy, 2006, p.1).

The behaviour policy, however, advocates practices that are exclusionary and militate against equal opportunities as it supports the removal of pupils from their lessons:

'... a pupil may be isolated from his normal class until such time that the school is satisfied that the student's behaviour is such that he can return to lessons'
(Behaviour Policy, 2006, p.9).

The measures then put in place for these students are, by their very nature, exclusionary and yet they operate within a school that declares:

'We, the pupils, parents, guardians, governors and all staff at [name of school] believe that the school community is to provide the best educational opportunities for all individuals and groups within the school' (Equal Opportunities Policy, 2004, p.1).

Such rhetoric does not reflect the experiences of some pupils. For them, the practices authorised by the behaviour policy mean that they are excluded for varying lengths of time and that their opportunities are less than equal. This is perhaps most poignantly exemplified through the school's rather inaptly named inclusion centre. Students can be placed here for extended periods and their education compromised rather than enhanced. A number of factors can account for this. Firstly, the centre is staffed by learning mentors and therefore pupils can be without direct contact with their subject teachers and classmates for in excess

of six weeks, with detrimental effects as a number of participants recognised in this study:

'I think ... the [name of inclusion centre] ... it's a stupid idea ... I don't think it should be so long either ... it should only be for a week possibly two weeks at most ... It's like they haven't been able to be naughty for a long while so they're gonna 'explode' when they come out ... cos they keep them in there for about six weeks and I don't think that's a good idea at all ... six weeks is a long time to keep a kid excluded ... they'll think the school has done that to them ... they're going to think "why should I respect the school when they're going to keep me in a thing for six weeks" ... Someone says "it's like being in a prison" which it is cos you're cut off by the fences ... you have people watching you all the time ... it's like being in a prison really, a miniature prison in the school'
(Interview - Year 11 student).

A pupil who had been placed in the inclusion centre for an extended period of time believed it had not been effective in helping him with the very behaviour that resulted in him being placed there:

'... I've been in there for quite a while now ... 'Bout 3 or 4 months now. It hasn't really worked for me cos I keep getting into fights ... Like when a criminal gets locked up it don't make them better' (Key Stage Three Focus Group).

Another pupil in the inclusion centre described his feelings when he saw other children walking past:

'... that like gets me to feel sad cos they're part of the school, I feel rejected ... I feel down and don't know where to go ... now lost hope' (Interview – Year 9 student).

The fact that the inclusion centre is staffed entirely by support staff raises issues. The decision to employ only support personnel to work in the centre has been

determined by financial considerations. The cost of staffing as an issue is not unique to my school. Lovey (2002) observes:

‘As one head said: “TAs are great. I am appointing four more next week. I can have four for the price of one teacher.” One has to ask whether the quality of support given by a TA is “good enough” (p.13).

Other researchers have also questioned the deployment of support staff. Balshaw (1999) notes:

‘... many more schools have ... chosen to appoint assistants to their staff, in many cases instead of teachers as a cost-saving ploy. There are, of course, moral and professional implications in these decisions, particularly where the most vulnerable children in the system are seen to be entrusted to those members of staff who on the face of it are the least qualified to work with them’ (p.5).

Teachers in our study have commented on their dissociation from their students as a result of them being placed in the centre. A middle manager observed:

‘It is so frustrating that the momentum is taken out of the learning process because he is now destined to struggle in my subject and therefore he is likely to be more frustrated and demonstrate that frustration, presumably with those who have created that situation. Why should he be held back in my subject when there was never a problem with any aspect of his learning or behaviour?’
(Interview - Middle manager).

The practice referred to in the behaviour policy, of teachers sending work to the centre for their students and then marking it on its return elicited criticism:

'... in my experience the work was either not done, presumably because he wouldn't do it or he went off bloody singing or whatever to the [name of special school visited by students once a week as part of the inclusion centre's programme] or whatever it was. Sometimes it came back, but was shallow because it reflected just the resources and had none of the understanding or depth from the classroom discussion or activity' (Interview - Middle manager).

Teachers also raised concerns about the educational value of the school's inclusion centre:

'Their methods may not be educationally sound, from some of the things you hear and see ... I think the [name of inclusion centre] needs a teacher in it permanently, who is fixed there and they direct the activities ... that way you've got both arms of the problem dealing with the pupil, you've got the educational consistency and follow through and you've got people who can spend time supporting them in both an academic and an emotional way ... I don't know that it is working' (Interview - Senior leader).

Issues raised by both staff and pupils question a major strand of the school's policy and practice for the inclusion of marginalised students. The school employs other forms of exclusion, namely isolation, internal exclusion and fixed term exclusions, but they are short-term measures, rarely exceeding three days. Ironically, the strategy the school uses to support the inclusion of marginalised pupils appears to disadvantage them in terms of their educational development and in essence denies them equal opportunities. A further concerning trend also emerged:

'There may also be issues of ethnicity, if there is a preponderance of black children for example ... if that is an issue then we've got to start asking questions about why a certain minority group is being put into ... that room, and what is it saying as regards equality issues

and about our perception of ... certain groups within our community?’ (Senior leader – interview).

The records kept regarding referrals to the inclusion centre confirm that there is indeed a ‘preponderance’ of Black African children placed there and this reflects previous studies. There is agreement in the literature that a disproportionately high number of Black pupils are excluded from school (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Osler, 1997; Parsons, 1999; Wright *et al.*, 2000; Hallam and Castle, 2001; Stevens, 2007; Hallam and Rogers, 2008). There is also consensus that although the number of Black pupils being excluded is falling, the rate continues to be disproportionately high.

Although the students participating in our study were not permanently excluded, it seems that the consequences of exclusionary practices employed by the school are similar to the serious consequences noted in the literature:

‘A sizeable proportion of permanently excluded pupils simply disappear from the educational system. Many appear to be out of school for long periods of time with little or no educational input and as a result suffer educationally and personally’ (Hallam and Castle, 2001, p.170).

This assertion reflects the experience of a year eleven student who had spent a considerable amount of time in the school’s inclusion centre and was then placed on the extended day programme. He observed:

‘I was supposed to be going to a music college and now, since they took away my GCSE Music, I can’t go there anymore ... I don’t think it’s fair because that ruins people’s chances, people’s dreams’ (Peer interview).

Moreover, I question whether the situation regarding exclusion from school has improved, as the figures reporting the decrease of permanent exclusions for Black pupils appear to suggest. Are alternative forms of exclusion masking the real picture?

Some of the teachers in our study referred to the idea of the inclusion centre being useful in providing respite for teachers and this notion is evident in the literature (Holland and Homerton, 1994). However, Holland and Homerton argue that such provision has disadvantages as they are concerned that teachers would negate responsibility for pupils with EBD, believing staff in school centres catering for challenging pupils have specialist skills for working with these pupils that classroom teachers do not possess. Other teachers in our study however wanted to retain their responsibility for pupils who were referred to the inclusion centre. They questioned the wisdom of long term placements in the centre, arguing that this practice compromises pupils' academic progress and social development.

Some teachers have adopted informal practices that do not reflect the school's official policies or praxis. Such procedures include sending pupils out of class for varying periods of time. Other teachers have unilaterally refused to teach particular pupils as a result of incidents that have rendered these children's behaviour unacceptable in their estimation. Rather than referring such incidents on to the relevant authorities, they have simply informed the pupils concerned.

Consequently, these pupils have spent those lessons in the corridors or have wandered around the school, having not been provided with alternative accommodation or work to complete. In the course of my work as a senior teacher, pupils have informed me that a small minority of teachers ignore the vast majority

of pupils in their classes and concentrate on a small group of students instead. They have acknowledged that this makes them feel excluded and resentful. Through this research I have discovered that this informal practice is more widespread than I imagined. It is quite apparent that these informal practices are inconsistent with the inclusion of marginalised students; however, it would appear that some of the school's formal practices are also open to the same judgement.

Despite the school's laudable aims, as espoused in its policies, one is left questioning how our practices correspond with the worthy intentions of the *Every Child Matters* agenda. The measures we put in place, and particularly how we operate our inclusion centre, certainly jeopardise at least three of the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes. We are compromising their opportunities for:

'Enjoying and achieving
Making a positive contribution
Economic wellbeing' (DfES, 2003, p.7).

This raises the question of whether we are:

'... enabling them to achieve their full potential in schools ...
helping them to have a stimulating and happy childhood ...
enabling them to feel good about themselves' (Reid, 2005, p.15).

This study has alerted me to some of the anomalies between both policies and practices and the inclusion of marginalised pupils. This awareness must be shared

with professionals within and beyond my school. My steps towards raising others' recognition of these concerns are discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Implications for Policy and Practice

Our research highlighted that pupils' relationships with others are central to understanding behaviour; indeed, it suggests that challenging behaviour may be a social construction as it is located in relationships. Students behave well for teachers whom they respect. A major factor in determining pupils' approbation is teachers' abilities to 'control' their students by setting and enforcing clear boundaries. Pupils disrespect and disregard teachers whom they consider to be 'weak'. They are critical of teachers whose pedagogical and interpersonal skills they deem to be deficient. In addition, we found that 'blame' featured significantly in participants' perspectives on challenging behaviour and was connected to the theme of relationships. Those who have close relationships with students, namely their parents, friends and peers, were blamed for students' misbehaviour. The emotion that misbehaviour elicits was also apparent in the data and underpinned the desire to 'other' and exclude 'challenging children'. These findings inform the discussion we now present of the implications and outcomes of this research and our recommendations.

I was initially surprised and disappointed by some of my co-researchers' conclusions from the data when I first read them. However reflexivity enabled me to stand back from these responses and recognise that they reflected my own bias regarding 'challenging pupils'. My reflections convinced me to hand over the drawing out of the implications of this research and the subsequent recommendations to others. I asked my co-researchers to reflect on their findings and present them to the senior leadership team so that their interpretations of the findings might be given prominence. Such an approach appealed to me for two

reasons. Firstly, I felt that it was a collaborative action and emphasised a commitment to student voice, and secondly I recognised that it would minimise the risk of any bias I have creeping into the process. The students submitted their recommendations for teachers, students and SLT in light of their findings (see Appendix 9). During their presentation I became very aware of the value of the process of dialogue that ensued. Not only did the senior leaders listen attentively, they asked questions which stimulated further reflection on the part of my co-researchers.

Their paper included the need to:

- **Improve punishment system to ensure empty threats are not made**
- **Improve contact system with home and get parents more involved**
- **Improve punishment system:**
 - **Remove from lesson**
 - **Exclude internally**
 - **Exclude permanently'**

(Co-researchers' recommendations to SLT – Appendix 9).

This extract demonstrates that many of my co-researchers' recommendations were very punitive-oriented and reinforced exclusionary measures. They appear to have taken on board a 'deficit' model of certain children and to have embraced a bi-polar categorisation of students as either *disruptive* or *disrupted* (Araújo, 2005). They seem not to have recognised that, at times, they misbehave, and have 'othered' students who do not conform to official expectations regarding conduct. It could be argued that they have succumbed to 'bad mouthing' (Corbett, 1996) non-conforming students. This is only one way of interpreting their deliberations,

however. It could equally be that I have been seduced by the social inclusion discourse (Levitas, 1998), with its emphasis on accessibility to mainstream society.

Once the co-researchers had talked through their recommendations, a member of SLT commented that it seemed a 'big jump' to go from internally excluding a student to permanently excluding him if he were to 're-offend'. One of my co-researchers replied:

'Hadn't really thought about that [paused], but, yeah, I can see that'.

My co-researcher considered this point and then suggested that permanent exclusion should happen if a pupil had been internally excluded on three different occasions, but that a process of talking and listening to him and trying to find the source of the problem should go on at the same time. This exchange made real for me the point that Fielding (2004) makes regarding the dialogic model of student voice and its power to effect change through:

'... the active engagement of students and teachers working in partnership' (p.306).

However, many positive points were made during the meeting, and discussion between students and SLT was very constructive, the latter appearing favourably disposed to action in light of the recommendations. This led me to explore ways that I could disseminate the findings from this study more widely and involve students and staff in determining:

‘... how it might affect the practice of others in the world of education’ (Arthur, *et al.*, 2005, p.78).

This development resulted in the sharing of our findings within the school, and more widely across the borough. On the first day of the new academic year 2009, I presented the findings as part of our in-service training and asked staff, both teaching and support, to contribute their views regarding implications for policy and practice using a proforma I had devised (Appendix 11). I wanted to make this an interactive session and so I asked them initially to complete a table listing all the major and minor themes emerging from the data. I asked them to indicate whether they thought these themes arose from either staff or pupil data, or were evident in both. I then asked staff to suggest which themes they thought might have been major themes and for which party. If they suggested a theme featured in both sets of data, I asked them to consider if it was more prevalent amongst pupils or staff. I was delighted with the way this session went; it was interactive and definitely seemed to stimulate people’s thinking. Their surprise at some of the findings was evident. A few days later a member of staff approached me and said:

‘I really enjoyed your presentation last week. You made your point beautifully, without pointing fingers at anyone, but you got them to think’.

I was so delighted with this feedback that I wrote it down immediately in my journal, verbatim! I was also pleased to read a comment a teacher had written at the end of his completed proforma:

‘(I WILL TAKE ON BOARD POINTS FOR MY TEACHING)’.

In addition, I was struck by a comment a senior leader made following my presentation. He was taken aback by the idea that teachers were critical of the

way SLT addressed misbehaviour. He had considered SLT to be supportive of teachers and therefore was troubled to discover that they did not feel as supported as he had thought. His personal engagement with the findings from the study is indicative of the reflective positions staff took in putting forward their suggestions regarding the implications of the findings of this study for policies and practices.

I used the same approach in my presentations of the findings to the student council and at the two conferences for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) organised by the borough. Although I had not originally envisaged sharing our results with pupils, I became convinced that this was an important part of dissemination, given that the findings had, in very large part, been uncovered by students, both as participants and as researchers. They have been instrumental in making sense of the area under investigation and I felt that it was only right to share the findings with them, given that the study focused on their daily experiences in school just as much as staff's.

The student council is made up of a representative from every tutor group in the school. The form representatives fed back to their tutor groups on this matter, as they do on all significant matters addressed at student council, and so the entire student body had access to the findings of this research. Also, some of the co-researchers prepared a report to share findings with students.

A great amount of discussion about behaviour was engendered in the wake of all this dissemination, which ensured that our research findings retained a high profile in the school. Suddenly it appeared that the project, instead of terminating with the

publication of recommendations, had proved – somewhat unexpectedly – to be the catalyst for a whole raft of student-centred reforms.

As a result of these various consultations it was agreed that our school's teaching and learning and behaviour policies would be reviewed in relation to each other and, thus, focus on behaviour in terms of its relationship to learning. This decision arose in response to the students' views relating to the lack of stimulating activities resulting in boredom and misbehaviour. It was also decided that the process of devising and agreeing these new policies should include all teaching and support staff. Furthermore, it was unanimously agreed that students would be actively involved in the development of these new policies in order that all parties have a voice in their construction and ownership in their implementation.

The school's inclusion centre was also discussed following these deliberations and its modus operandi will now change in light of the findings of this study. Students will no longer have a full time, six week placement and there will be a deliberate distancing from its previous role as a punitive measure. Consequently, its focus will be on mentoring and support sessions and pupils will access fully those lessons where they are engaged. Such an approach should help alleviate the distress that a number of pupils have expressed through this research, as well as the frustrations of their teachers as they realise that their pupils' progress is being hampered by interventions aimed at resolving behaviours that do not manifest themselves within the context they share.

Following a meeting with the borough's Youth Participation Manager, it has been agreed that a group of students from the school, including some who have been

involved in the research, will run workshops at the borough's Student Council Conference, which is due to take place during the next academic year. As we discussed this research and how it has impacted on the development of student voice within the school, the Youth Participation Manager exclaimed:

'You're streets ahead of other schools. I've found a school that's doing student voice properly. It's made my week!'

She has asked that I work with professionals during the conference, sharing our research and experience of student voice with teachers in order to extend good practice to other schools. She would like students from the school to share their experiences of 'having a voice' in order to inspire other young people to become actively involved in their communities.

I hope that the contribution the students and I make at this conference will help to strengthen the growth of student voice across the borough. I am aware that professionals from education and youth work, including the borough's Director of Education, will be attending and that this offers an opportunity to share our research story and how it has inspired the growing influence of student voice in our school. I am confident that our message will encourage young people and adults to consider the potential of student voice in transforming relationships between students and the adults working with them. I hope that we will stimulate the desire to embrace it within their own contexts.

School policies and practices

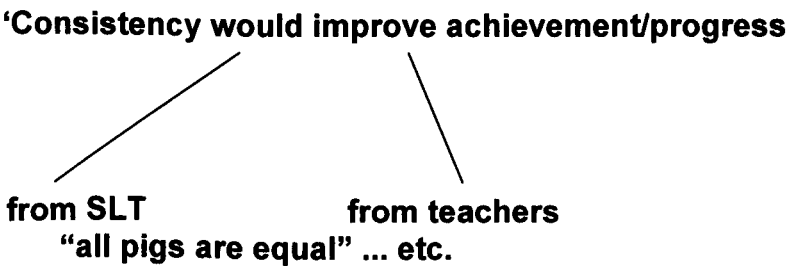
The information that I have gathered from the proforma (Appendix 11) completed by the student council, staff at the school and the borough’s NQTs has enabled me to address my fourth research question:

- What are the implications of the findings for the development of a collaborative, whole school approach to the inclusion of marginalised pupils?

The major themes to emerge from this information were consistency, collaboration, clarity of expectations, improved learning experience for pupils and relationships. The strongest theme was consistency and related to the implementation of the behaviour policy, procedures regarding disciplinary action, as well as all staff working collectively and taking on responsibility for behaviour. The following extracts from the proforma illustrate this theme:

‘Put findings into practice ie insist on consistent approach from all staff in ensuring the appropriate learning environment exists in every classroom’ (School staff).

‘All staff should try to comply with policies and practices to enable consistency across all areas. esp. discipline and inclusion’ (School staff).



Consistent approach to discipline – “pupils know where they stand” (School staff).

‘... a school-wide Behaviour Policy with rewards and sanctions that everyone follows’ (School staff).

The students' views relating to consistency revolved around appropriate punishments and teachers being firm and fair:

'Teachers need to lay down the law! They need to impose themselves, not as dictators but as guides' (Student).

Many staff noted the centrality of the behaviour policy in ensuring consistency and many of them made recommendations in relation to it, particularly regarding the need to look at it again to make sure it is practical, as well as to give the community ownership of it:

'Perhaps school policies should be reviewed in light of the findings. Are all our policies relevant and workable?'

'A mutual understanding of the policies between staff, pupils and parents – involvement in writing the policies'.

'CPD course for whole school to establish policies'.

'Ensure policies are practical and applied consistently'.

These responses reflect recommendations made by Turner (2003) following research she undertook at her school focusing on the effectiveness and inclusivity of her school's policy. Her study found, as this one has, that the behaviour policy is crucial in safeguarding consistency.

Respondents also stressed the need for clarity of expectations when addressing the issue of discipline:

'Clear rules ... so can be consistent' (School staff).

The idea of collaboration featured significantly in responses and included working with other staff, involving pupils and liaising with parents. What struck me about this particular theme was the positive and constructive nature of the suggestions and the move away from the concept of 'blame' that had pervaded the data previously gathered from students and staff:

'Sharing good practice for more creative lessons' (NQT).

'Sharing of strategies for dealing with disruptive behaviour' (School staff).

'Encourage dialogue with students – student council etc... how can they contribute to the development of expectations/behaviour ethos' (NQT).

'Encourage pupils to share their expectations of teachers as well as teachers sharing their expectations of pupils' (NQT).

'Whilst the practice of 'phoning home' was considered by pupils and teachers alike to be an intrinsic and effective part of good policy, from all parties this was undermined by the notion of blame' (School staff).

To improve, contact home should be more regular, encompassing both positive and negative developments in the triumvirate relationships of parents, students and teachers. This would alleviate the idea of singular responsibility, or lack of it. It would help to promote good relationships' (NQT).

This last quotation also highlights one of the other dominant themes arising from the suggestions made by staff and students, that of relationships:

'If teachers could become more approachable as it helps students' (Student).

'Relationships are key. Parents and children. Teachers and children. They need to be enhanced and put into practise greater. Pupils need to feel their teachers care! They need to feel their parents are not stressing them but indicating an interest for what they undergo' (Student).

A major feature of the student data related to the importance of rewards. Although rewards were mentioned by staff, they assumed greater significance for pupils:

'If a student has worked exceptionally well he should be rewarded and so then he will know good work leads to something' (Student).

Both staff and students also noted the importance of improving pupils' learning experience in lessons:

'... more interesting lessons' (Student).

'Ensuring lessons are fun interesting and motivating for pupils' (NQT).

'Allow students to give an input on lesson planning so that interest, motivation and 'fun factor' are maintained. Teachers are sometimes very unaware of what could be fun or motivating' (NQT).

'A more positive approach towards learning; fun and interesting lessons' (School Staff).

Having been party to the dissemination of the findings of this study through my co-researchers' presentation to SLT and my presentation to staff, the headteacher has decided to review *all* policies and to involve students and staff more fully in that process. This work has already begun with a revision of the anti-bullying policy by a working party consisting of staff and students. The teaching and learning and behaviour policies have also now been reviewed by eliciting the views of students and staff through a questionnaire that was devised by the student council. The completed questionnaires were analysed using the qualitative thematic analysis approach employed in this research. This analysis was carried out by the student council itself, year eight students who have been learning how

to conduct research and undertaking their own investigative studies, and staff who expressed an interest in learning research skills. Further consultations have taken place through student and staff forums. The themes emerging from the questionnaires and minutes of the forums have informed the rewriting of the new policies. These policies are the product of collaboration between pupils and staff, and all parties acknowledge that they have been listened to.

As I reflect on the past academic year that started with the dissemination of our findings to staff and pupils, I recognise the impact that our research has had on our school community. I feel that there has been a discernable change in the culture of the school and this has necessitated the rewriting of documentation to reflect developments in practice. Three key policies have been reviewed so far in light of our findings and although they are in their infancy in terms of implementation, the practice they promote is already evident.

My co-researchers' contributions are apparent in the developments that have taken place. The school's inclusion unit is now dedicated to therapeutic approaches, and central to these is working in partnership with parents and talking and listening to students. During the research and dissemination of findings pupils recommended that counselling should be made available for students whose behaviour causes concern. We have since engaged the services of two counsellors who work with students and offer support to families. These initiatives have helped prevent many students becoming disaffected and excluded from school.

A clearer system of rules and sanctions is now in place following the recommendations of my co-researchers. Their proposals were supported by students and staff, as evident in data collected from the whole-school questionnaires devised by the student council as well as from feedback from the student and staff forums convened to discuss bullying and behaviour. The inclusion centre will no longer be used to accommodate students who are internally excluded and teachers have been timetabled to deliver lessons in the centre from September 2010. A new internal exclusion room will operate from the beginning of the new academic year. In the past the internal exclusion room encountered problems due to staffing. This issue has been considered at length and new staffing arrangements devised. In addition, students had been given tasks to do that many considered to be boring, repetitive and pointless. This led to confrontations as some refused to do the work. The new room has been refurbished and computers installed so that pupils can complete coursework and access programmes that are used for GCSE courses and KS3 core subjects (Appendix 12). The ambience has been transformed and emphasises the importance of pupils' access to learning.

We have introduced a new electronic system to improve communication between staff and with parents on behavioural issues. The programme has been designed to reinforce teachers' accountability for pupils' classroom behaviour in light of the findings from our research. It also clarifies the types of behaviour that warrant intervention by middle and senior leaders. This approach also responds to the research findings from staff, which stressed the need for greater clarity and consistency.

A number of initiatives have been introduced to address pupils' observations regarding boredom as a trigger for misbehaviour and the possibility of interactive learning alleviating this problem. The requirement for more active and collaborative ways of learning has been emphasised in the discourses used on a daily basis through staff meetings and conversations amongst teachers, as well as being featured in the new Teaching and Learning and Behaviour for Learning policies. In order to ensure that this stipulation is followed, monitoring procedures will be carried out on an ongoing basis. Those that have already taken place have included lesson observations and interviews with pupils and staff conducted by middle and senior leaders, personnel from the local authority and National Strategies as well as freelance external consultants who are also Ofsted inspectors. The data collected confirms that most lessons now facilitate the active engagement of students and that students enjoy their learning:

'Pupils have enjoyed Year 7 for a number of reasons ... The range of activities ... Working in groups' (Report prepared by National Strategies Consultant, July 2010).

'... a variety of interesting and creative teaching and learning styles are employed – these ensure that students are actively engaged and involved and, as a result, they make good progress in their learning' ('Whole School Review', July 2010, prepared by freelance external consultants).

This marks an improvement from our last Ofsted report (Evans, 2007), which noted:

'The good teaching and learning seen in the school is not shared widely enough and so the quality is inconsistent both between teachers and between subjects ... too

much of the learning is passive. One student rightly said,
“lessons would be better if we were more actively involved”
(p.5).

Our research also highlighted the significance of positive relationships with staff for students. This finding has been frequently referred to throughout the year at staff meetings and training events. Staff have responded to this imperative and the good relations that exist between teachers and students have been recognised by pupils, staff and visitors. A National Strategies consultant, having undertaken a two day review which incorporated interviews with pupils, featured this in her written report in the section listing the reasons why pupils have enjoyed their academic year:

- **They have faith and respect in the expertise of their teachers**
- **The support they have received in order to be successful and appreciate being encouraged/challenged to do their best’** (Report prepared by National Strategies Consultant, July 2010).

In another report, freelance external consultants observed:

‘... most teachers were observed ... The majority of teaching observed was good or better ... Teachers have good relationships with students in most lessons and certainly where teaching is good or better, relationships are strong and these lead to well behaved students who cooperate in lessons. In these lessons boys want to do well and try hard for their teachers’ (‘Whole School Review’, July 2010, prepared by freelance external consultants).

There is still room for improvement however as these consultants also noted:

'In lessons which are less successful, teaching tends to be more didactic or teacher led ... In inadequate lessons, behaviour and class management tend to be significant weaknesses and relationships fragile' (ibid.).

Our school has become a 'moving school' as it is:

'... continually seeking to develop and refine its responses to the challenges it meets' (Carrington and Elkins, 2002, p.52).

We want to extend the good practice observed in the majority of lessons and plans are underway to provide continuing professional development (CPD) on interactive pedagogy and this remit has become a responsibility for our Advanced Skills Teacher. Discussions have taken place with other members of staff who will become part of the team delivering this initiative.

Undoubtedly there have been fundamental changes in the school following our research and this has impacted on student discipline:

'... behaviour is improving with reducing number of exclusions ... students are well known to the school and known as individuals ... A range of strategies are in place to support the needs of vulnerable students and their families. Support to adjust behaviour is good and improving' ('Whole School Review', July 2010, prepared by freelance external consultants).

The promotion of student voice has been instrumental in shaping the school's new culture and staff are engaging with this development as the rewriting of policies in collaboration with students demonstrates. Furthermore, CPD has taken place to enable staff to elicit and analyse student perspectives.

The freelance consultants noted:

'The headteacher ... sets a clear agenda for school improvement placing students at the heart of all new initiatives ... there is a strong sense of teamwork and common aims amongst senior staff ... The senior team are ... actively promoting school improvement' ('Whole School Review', July 2010, prepared by freelance external consultants).

They also commented:

'The extent to which students make a positive contribution to the school community is strong. The school council is active and students act as academic mentors. Members of the school council speak enthusiastically about their role and how they can make a difference. They devised a questionnaire, for example, for other students and analysed it themselves. Students enjoy taking responsibility, acting as coach or assessor in lesson, which they do very well' (ibid.).

Coming to the end of their tenure as student council representatives, pupils shared their thoughts by completing a proforma entitled 'A reflection on my year as a member of the Student Council':

'What i have achevied and experienced in the School council was fun, a sense of leadership, a main party in school, responible, trust worthy, I think that when i put my name forward to be one was one of the best thing that i could of chose to do in my school life, i will remember some of the key choices i have made to benifit the school and most meetings and i would love to stay on longer' (Year 10 student).

'We have made a big difference to our school' (Year 9 student).

'As a school council member it is my job to serve my form group and provide projects that will benefit for the

future of our school. I can say that I absolutely love this job as I love to help everybody' (Year 7 student).

'It has let me have an insight to a successfull developing school, by the help of the student body itself' (Year 10 student).

It is recognised by staff and pupils that the nature and operation of the student council has been transformed during the past two years. A middle leader commented:

'The school council has never been as high profile as it is now. Everyone can see that it has changed the way we do things, and that's down to student voice. Before, we had to co-opt pupils to be the form rep, now the kids are desperate to be elected on to it. They see the difference it makes to the school and respect it has had from staff and pupils' (Interview).

As a 'moving school', we are developing further the role of students. Student Leadership now features as a responsibility for one of the deputy headteachers. The headteacher has decided that a Junior Leadership Team (JLT) will be introduced from September 2010 and will met regularly with the SLT to discuss issues and make decisions regarding the school's future.

Our research and the emerging culture within the school provides an alternative view to the conclusions McCluskey (2008) draws regarding the magnitude of students' vision for change. Having examined other studies she highlights:

**'...the frequently limited scope of desired changes and ...
the "smallness" of young people's desires' (p.458).**

In light of my own experience of researching student voice, I would challenge McCluskey's conclusion. 'Smallness', I would argue, reflects her own estimation of the significance of these issues. Students in our school have raised similar issues and actions have taken place as a result, including changes to the menu offered by the cafeteria, refurbishment of toilets, installation of water fountains, benches, picnic tables and new litter bins (Appendix 13). Our own research and its legacy has highlighted the significance of the school's physical environment for students and supports similar previous findings (Smith and Sharp, 1994; Watkins and Wagner, 2000; Lines, 2003).

Various forums for eliciting student voice highlighted dissatisfaction regarding arrangements for break times. Benches were purchased by the student council following their request to the governors for funding and formed an integral part of a scheme to improve facilities for pupils during rest periods. Previously, students were confined to the 'Cage' (Appendix 14), a term used by staff and students to denote the playground which is surrounded by fencing. Other areas have now been allocated so that pupils have more space to play and socialise.

The issues of litter and graffiti emerged from data provided by students during our research. A year 9 pupil included a picture (Appendix 10) illustrating this problem in his series of drawings and a year 7 student took a photograph to highlight his concern. Both students discussed their reasons for making these images:

'Nearly every break and the playground's full of litter cos no one uses the bins' (Year 9 student – interview with the adult researcher).

'When my dad drives me to school, sometimes we see ... them go by sometimes smoking or doing stuff

they're not meant to, like graffiti ... littering' (Year 7 student – interview with the adult researcher).

'... the graffiti in the school toilets, there's lots of graffiti in the school ... people graffitiing it's not nice, people don't like it' (Year 7 student – peer interview).

Concern about the school environment has also surfaced in research projects undertaken by year eight students as part of their 'Learning to Learn' lessons.

Changes to the fabric of our school bear witness to the commitment of the school to student voice. Pupils appreciate the empowering experience of seeing their ideas acted upon:

'I have enjoyed having a say on where the money gets spent on' (Year 10 student - reflection on year as member of Student Council).

'The meetings gave us a chance to discuss what is happening around the school and to improve it' (Year 9 student - reflection on year as member of Student Council).

'We have made improvements through benches and anti-bullying schemes' (Year 9 student - reflection on year as member of Student Council).

Personnel responsible for the premises have commented that graffiti no longer appears around the site, whereas it had been a problem for many years and had proved resistant to actions taken by staff.

The cultural change that has taken place as a result of students' engagement in this research and its aftermath reflect the experience of St. George-in-the-East School during the headship of Alex Bloom in the mid-twentieth century:

'To the children the school becomes *our* school with a consequent enrichment of community feeling' (Bloom, 1953, p.175).

In discussion with SLT, I asked if the team agreed that there had been a significant cultural change in the school over the previous year. The answer was affirmative. My second question asked whether we could sustain this change, and the reply was:

'Not only sustain it, but improve it!'

This is an important statement as the backing of SLT will be influential in embedding the changes reported above, and in supporting further developments, some of which are described in the final chapter.

As this research has progressed towards its conclusion in order to comply with the time frame of the Open University's Doctorate of Education programme, a point made in the programme guide (Arthur *et al.*, 2005) resonates with me:

'There is a sense in which research is never finished' (p.45).

I am aware that I am presenting a partial picture of the potential insights and outcomes that this research has to offer. This conclusion partly arises from the constraints that have operated in relation to the involvement of the co-researchers in data analysis and interpretation. The co-researchers have analysed questionnaires completed by pupils and staff, but have not been involved in analysing other data, although it was originally intended that they would. The

analysis of data took longer than the research team had anticipated, and as the co-researchers were year eleven students, time ran out as their GCSEs approached. However, I believe that the data collected bears further interrogation, just as Nias (1993) found in her study of primary teachers talking. I intend to continue to undertake this task with other pupil co-researchers and, if appropriate, submit papers for publication.

Chapter Six: Conclusions: Personal and Professional Reflection

Personal development

This project has proved to be a profound personal and professional journey for me. I have learnt how to research by actively participating alongside the children. I have developed as a researcher and reflexivity has been an important tool in this. It was clear that an innovative and multi-faceted research approach had a positive impact both on the student researchers and myself as it enabled us to grow in various ways. The students felt empowered by being involved in the project and as a result their interest in school matters increased and their confidence grew. Their abilities to reflect for themselves on issues were also developed. For instance, the co-researchers discussed with me how their presentation to the SLT had been received and how they felt about delivering it. They admitted that they had been extremely anxious at the prospect of meeting senior management and had been nervous at the beginning of their presentation. However, they had felt increasingly at ease as they were aware that their audience was attentive and genuinely interested in their findings. They acknowledged that they were elated by the experience.

An example of one co-researcher's personal growth was confirmed by his mother who thanked me for including her son in this project. She was aware that he had been enthralled by the research and he had become increasingly confident. She reiterated a point that her son had previously made to me. He had written about his experience as a co-researcher in his application to a local college that is perennially oversubscribed and had been asked to talk about it in his interview. He

was convinced that this contributed significantly to his being offered a place on the course he had applied for.

Other pupils discussed with me various developments in school, for instance the increased presence of staff at break times, seeing them as a response to issues they had highlighted in the research. It was apparent to these students that their contributions had made an impact and that their suggestions were listened to and acted upon.

The study has also enhanced my own professional development as a senior manager and teacher. It has helped shape my understanding of my identity as a leader and has contributed to the vision I have. Central to this vision is collaborative working between staff and pupils, democratic participation and decision making through sustained development of the use of student voice. My lessons are much more interactive and less didactic than they were previously, and I endeavour to inject a sense of fun whenever I can. I appreciate my students' divided selves and can respond more effectively to their identities as both children and young adults. My understanding of their desire to play has helped prevent me from negatively interpreting their motives.

Much of what I have learnt that has enriched my professional practice has also enabled me to grow personally as well. As a parent I am far more open with my own children and I am committed to listening to and appreciating their points of view. In addition, I am more respectful of their increasing need for autonomy as they progress through their teenage years.

As I review my journey as a researcher, I am amazed by how far I have come, epistemologically speaking. This growth has come about as a result of a number of influences including pioneering research undertaken in education and other disciplines, as exemplified by the work of Dr Diana Rose, Dr Mary Kellett and Dr Samantha Punch, as well as my commitment to the process of reflexivity, having been inspired by the work of Dr David Hellowell. These proved to be seminal discoveries for me.

I have become confident in developing a more innovative and collaborative approach to investigations. Having reviewed the work of others (e.g. Wilson, 1998; Dodds and Hart, 2001; Rose, 2002) I realise that I had been content to choose from a limited range of methodologies deriving from the social sciences when researching for my Masters degree and in the initial stages of my doctorate study. I recognise that in my early career as a researcher I also:

‘... thought there were certain fixed ways of doing research’
(Wilson, 1998, p.163).

I abandoned this approach following the advice I received from the assessors of my initial study and I subsequently adopted and developed a wide range of research methods that were novel to me and this resulted in an intricate investigative strategy. The complexities of this approach led to delays to the planned fieldwork as the initial stage of exploring the various options open to participants, in order to ensure informed consent, became far more time-consuming than I had anticipated. Consequently, I felt under pressure to make up for lost time and this, combined with the anxieties I felt at this stage regarding the

difficulties involved in managing such diverse and innovative research methods, allied with my concerns about whether or not the *modus operandi* I had developed would deliver worthwhile data, meant that I was well and truly out of my comfort zone.

My reservations were ultimately negated as the complexity of utilising numerous new research methods delivered rich data. The use of multiple methods of data collection allowed findings to emerge through a variety of sources and thus engendered confidence in the accuracy and genuine nature of this qualitative research.

Using the research tools

My experiences with such a large number of familiar and less familiar research methods inevitably gave rise to some reflection concerning their relative merits.

Despite my initial enthusiasm, using photographs as a research tool did not live up to expectation. Only two of the five students who opted to take photographs returned their disposable cameras to me. I followed the advice of Barker and Weller (2003) and explained to the film developers that children had taken the photographs independently as part of a project and therefore I did not know the exact content of the films. I recognise my naivety in thinking that I had sufficiently protected the children, the school and myself against misuse of the cameras. I realised the potential danger I had exposed myself to following feedback from my supervisor to the progress report in which I had explained the steps I had taken. The experience highlighted an issue that I have not come across in the existing

literature: how to ensure the safeguarding of children and adults when using photographs as a research method. This is an area that requires exploration if other researchers are to use photography with children.

I was disappointed with the two sets of prints produced for different reasons. One pupil had taken only five photographs, although the disposable camera was capable of taking twenty-four images and only two of those images had been developed as the others had been too dark. The other set of photographs had not been taken in the school. As I reflected upon my reactions, I realised that this was an example of the process of pupils setting the agenda. I had in my mind a range of images the pupils might take, but this represented what I myself thought of behaviour in the school. The images the children selected demonstrated what was of significance to them. This was an important learning point for me, and it would not be the only one, as will become apparent in this appraisal.

The use of drawings was highly successful. The children who chose this method seemed to enjoy the process of expressing their ideas through this medium. They subsequently used their images as focal points for sharing their thoughts with me in the follow-up interviews. Consequently they controlled what was covered in the interview, and information that I had not expected to arise emerged from their drawings and verbal explanations.

A year nine student produced a set of drawings (Appendix 10) that contained positive images of pupils' behaviour and this surprised me. After reflecting on my initial bewilderment having first viewed the drawings, I realised that I had expected images to be produced that coincided with my own perceptions of student

behaviour. This child held an alternative perspective. Whilst I had a mindset which tended to construct student behaviour negatively reflecting my role as a senior teacher dealing with incidents that breach the school's discipline code on a daily basis, this pupil's daily experience was very different. He had focused on the positive aspects of student behaviour, but was also aware of the negative dimensions, as is apparent in his later drawings.

This pupil's viewpoint alerted me to differing perspectives between pupils and staff: pupils were more likely to express a favourable opinion regarding student behaviour than staff were. In addition, having taught this student and knowing him to be a quiet and reticent young man, I was struck by the fact that in structuring the interview around the drawings he had produced, he was much more forthcoming and confident than I had expected him to be, particularly as I had noted that in the focus group earlier in the research process he had been the most reserved of the six participants.

Most of the children who chose to keep a diary or produce a reflection opted for a written version, and only two pupils decided to record their thoughts on a digital recorder. Generally the entries were fairly brief and the pupils seemed to focus on aspects of their day, week or general experience that were of particular importance for them. The entries often resonated with emotion and related events that engendered strong feelings, which were then expanded upon in the follow-up interviews.

When I first looked at the diaries and some of the reflections, I felt disappointed by their lack of length and detail; however, I came to realise that they focused on the

essence of their concerns, but were more than willing to elaborate on these in the follow-up interviews. The diaries contained pared down information that alerted me to matters that were of particular significance. As with the photographs and drawings, the diaries and reflections provided the agenda for their interviews with me, therefore the students took control of what was discussed. This method was highly effective and I feel well worth using in research with young people.

Some of the teaching assistants also chose to write reflections and the same process was evident in the data they provided. They tended to produce more written information than most of the students and again highlighted issues of significance for them. They expanded upon their musings in the focus group with other teaching assistants. This process has convinced me of the value of this method with both children and adults.

Participatory rural appraisal also proved to be highly effective as it provided participants with a basis from which to develop discussions. The student and the teaching assistants who selected this method subsequently discussed their thoughts in peer focus groups.

Having analysed these focus group discussions, I appreciate how productive PRA was in facilitating participants' own extensive reflections on the topics discussed with peers. The participants referred to items they had included on their mind maps, flow or spider diagrams in the course of sharing their thoughts on particular matters and this process contributed to keeping their discussions on track.

The PRA approaches chosen by the participants allowed them to cover far more material than was evident in the diaries or reflections. However, I would

emphasise the need for follow up discussion to facilitate the detail and nuances of their thoughts to emerge, given that only key words or phrases are entered on the diagrams. Otherwise researchers may be left in a position of attributing meanings to these words or phrases that may not have been intended by the participants.

Peer interviews and focus groups proved to be popular with participants and were extremely effective in delivering rich data. The fact that I was not party to these discussions meant that participants followed their own agenda. Having analysed these discussions, I appreciate how frank and uninhibited participants were in these contexts. They may not have been so forthcoming had I been present. Despite the many positive aspects of these methods, they are not without their difficulties. Whilst they ensured my partiality was removed from the process, the vacuum can be filled by others' bias. Having analysed these discussions, I have noted how participants can use these opportunities to allow their own position to dominate.

My only regret with regard to these methods was that I did not extend their use to teaching staff. On reflection, I believe this would have provided fascinating insights. I feel I missed an opportunity to analyse teachers' perspectives as they explored their views together.

My abilities as an interviewer were developed and refined as a result of my more traditional interviews with participants: I learnt to listen. Earlier in the process, I tended to have a range of topics that I wanted to find out about and therefore asked questions relating to them if the points did not naturally occur in participants' discussions. However, I once more came to realise that this approach reflected my

own agenda and subsequently I tended to remain quiet. At first, I thought that this might inhibit participants, but it did not. They seemed happy just to talk to me and through this process issues of significance to them emerged. These interviews centred around participants' agendas and not my own. Consequently, the data gathered was far richer than would have been the case had I persevered with my initial approach. I would strongly recommend this technique to researchers interested in promoting participants' voices.

Originally, I had not intended to use questionnaires. However, as one of the student participants devised one and it became a significant instrument in collecting information, in retrospect I was very pleased that it had been incorporated. A huge amount of material was acquired from students and staff that would not have been possible had it not been for this method. Participants were happy to share their ideas using this tool and rich data were accumulated. I would also recommend this approach for promoting the voice of any marginalised group.

I believe that so many participants were willing to complete the questionnaire because they were told it had been created by a student co-researcher. Had I, as an adult researcher, produced a questionnaire it would have reflected my views and, I believe, it would have been a less attractive proposition for respondents. Both pupils and staff seemed genuinely interested because it was generated by a pupil. I am indebted to the year eleven student who made this possible through his initial suggestion about using a questionnaire and his subsequent participation as a co-researcher in devising it.

Limitations and constraints of the study

'Generalizability is a standard aim in quantitative research and is normally achieved by statistical sampling procedures ... it allows you to feel confident about the representativeness of your sample ... representativeness allows you to make broader inferences' (Silverman, 2006, pp.303-304)

As this is a qualitative case study, I do not claim that this research is representative in the sense applicable to quantitative research. Neither do I subscribe to the position adopted by a few writers, such as Stake (1994), who take the view that qualitative research is simply descriptive and that therefore seeking to generalise beyond the individual case is unnecessary. I consider that it is possible to generalise the findings from this study in a way that other qualitative researchers would recognise:

'Generalizability in naturalistic research is interpreted as comparability and transferability' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.137).

However, I accept that there are limits to which our findings can be generalised given that this research was undertaken in a particular type of school, as described in Chapter One, and utilised purposive sampling. The issue to consider is:

'... how far is it reasonable to generalise from the findings of one case study?' (Denscombe, 2007, p.42).

The degree to which it is possible to generalise our findings beyond the particular research context in which it was undertaken relates to the extent to which our school is representative of other secondary schools. Our school is one of a type (Hammersley, 1992; Yin, 1994) and therefore the extent to which our findings can be generalised to other schools in the same class is dependent upon the degree to which it is similar to others of its type. The study provides 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) by supplying detailed, nuanced accounts of the culture of the school and therefore readers have in-depth information that they can use in order to make informed judgements regarding the possibilities of the transferability of the findings to other settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The nature of qualitative research makes it virtually impossible to undertake an authentic replication given the features that contribute to the distinctive nature of individual schools. In addition, the role of the researcher as the main data collection instrument also impacts upon the feasibility of replicating a study.

Anyone wishing to replicate this study would need to be aware of the design of the study and reflect upon the specific context in which it was carried out. This study is unusual as it was conducted by a team of researchers comprising of students working with a deputy headteacher. This composition raised ethical issues which necessitated the redressing of power imbalances between the students and myself. To achieve this I focused on reflexivity and relinquished, as far as possible, my role as an authority figure, and pursued the students' agenda. Consequently, the research reflects a highly individualistic approach. Anyone wishing to replicate it would have to be committed to reflexivity and following the interests of students. The design of the study was flexible and organic in nature.

It grew out of the concerns of the students and the decisions they made. If a researcher were to replicate this approach, the students involved would be likely to pursue a different set of methods.

I believe the study has much to offer to policy and practice. It has had a significant impact on our school and I think it has the potential to provide insights to others despite its limitations and constraints.

I believe our study:

‘... may be relatable in a way that will enable members of similar groups to recognise problems and, possibly, to see ways of solving similar problems in their own group’ (Bell, 1999, p.13).

Further investigation

The process of conducting this investigation has highlighted two issues that warrant further exploration. Firstly, what other aspects of school life would students like to research? Secondly, what other methods of research could be used effectively? Pupils had expressed an interest in drama and music by ticking them on the research methods proforma (Appendix 2) and some suggested the idea of an **‘art wall’** or a **‘graff wall’** as ways of:

‘inviting young teen[s] to “express” there feeling’
(Research methods proforma - Year 8 student).

In addition, a year nine pupil proposed a:

‘scrap book, including photos, drawings, writing, etc.’.

I regret not pursuing these innovative ways of soliciting students' views. Issues of time and confidence explain why I did not. I was troubled initially by how data gathered via these alternative methods would be analysed. Having come to the end of the project, I feel more confident in exploring new approaches and trust in the abilities of student researchers to draw out themes emerging from information gathered from peers.

I have asked Key Stage Three students to identify areas they would like to investigate. Themes have emerged from their suggestions and encompass a range of issues relating to teaching and learning, as well as to the life of the school more generally. They want to investigate ways of improving lessons and homework, developing educational opportunities through school trips and pupils having greater autonomy in their learning by choosing the topics they wish to study. They would also like to explore the role of dialogue between pupils in lessons and the development of more interactive activities. In addition, they want to examine the problem of negative behaviour exhibited by some students, specifically smoking, bullying, fighting and swearing, as well as investigating ways of analysing relationships between younger and older pupils.

One of the most powerful messages that has come out of this process for me is that pupils want to be heard and involved in researching areas that they consider to be important. I was interested in understanding why children agreed to take part in the research project and devised a proforma (Appendix 15) to find out. Having examined the students' responses using qualitative thematic analysis, two trends emerge. Firstly, the pupils recognised that they would derive benefits from being involved, the most frequently mentioned being the notion that it would be fun. The

second and more prevalent trend was the idea of helping others and making a difference for pupils and the school as a whole. Their motives were predominantly altruistic, as these extracts illustrate:

'I want to help' (Year 10 student).

'I would like to make the classroom environment better, and safer even to work in' (Year 10 student).

'I have had behaviour problems and I whold like to sort them out. Something happened with my uncle he went mad and almost kill himself and I Don't wont uther people to go down that road' (Year 7 student).

Current initiatives

This study impacted upon the school long before the findings were formally disseminated to students and staff. By promoting the views of pupils and sharing developments with colleagues the project has influenced how other senior leaders have conceived a number of initiatives. After the 'formal' end of our research, the 'moving school' seems to have developed yet more momentum.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the work of the student council has significantly gained in creditability since the formal recognition of the importance of student voice as an integral aspect of the role of a newly appointed third deputy headteacher. Consequently, the new headteacher implemented a capitation of £500 per term for the student council to fund its own projects. In addition, he agreed to a range of initiatives suggested by this pupil body including a student magazine and enabling students to take equal responsibility for delivering the

school assemblies programme, alongside the senior leadership team and the year learning coordinators.

The student council has been instrumental in communicating the importance of student voice to the pupil body. Subsequently, the headteacher abandoned his plan to introduce a new school badge in response to a petition organised by a member of the student council which contained over four hundred students' signatures. Instead, he delegated the responsibility for this insignia to the student council. The students decided on modifications to the existing badge and their design was presented to SLT and governors and adopted as the school's emblem. This development illustrates how the school has moved up the pyramid of student voice (Mitra, 2005), graduating from being heard, through collaborating with adults to building the capacity for youth leadership. Furthermore, it exemplifies a point made by Mitra and Gross (2009) that is pertinent to this study:

'While we often write about adolescents as full of turmoil and angst, student voice instead focuses on ways in which young people can learn democratic principles by sharing their opinions and working to improve school conditions for themselves and others' (p.538).

Having embraced the precept of student voice and experienced its power to effect change, pupils are keen to extend their capacity for leadership beyond the school. Through their engagement in the youth council elections in February 2010, they have demonstrated their commitment to the principle of:

‘... more radical forms of partnership afforded by ...

“participatory democracy” (Fielding, 2009, p.506).

Thus, within the borough the school recorded the highest number of candidates standing for election as fifty six students stood compared with the average of ten for secondary schools. In addition, six hundred and six students, seventy one percent of the pupil body, voted and this exceeded the numbers voting in any other school, despite the fact that the number on roll is lower than the majority of schools participating in the elections.

A programme of study has now been introduced for Key Stage Three students that gives them the opportunity to engage in pupil devised research projects within curriculum time. It has been agreed that the findings of projects will be disseminated and recommendations followed wherever practicable. Through stimulating interest in investigative study and offering ongoing support for students and staff, I feel that I have promoted the establishment of a research community within school that is engaged in collaborative and reflective learning that in turn contributes to the development of educational policy and practice.

Not only do I wish to continue my career as a researcher, I want to continue to work collaboratively with colleagues in schools as I share Rose’s (2002) vision of teaching as a ‘research-based profession’. I want to continue to stimulate interest in practitioner research and provide support for other staff embarking on their own investigations. My research experiences chime with Rose’s stance:

‘Teachers need support in developing the confidence to get involved and, in many instances, this will require that

established and experienced researchers take a lead in involving classroom practitioners in the development of school-based projects. Once they are involved teachers need encouragement to experiment with a range of methodologies and approaches free from the mystique and jargon with which some researchers have previously guarded access to their realm' (p.47).

Finally, this study has intensified my desire to learn, in every sense of the word, and has increased the range of skills I have to embark upon new journeys of discovery. I believe that the lessons I have learnt as a result of reflexivity during the research process are at the heart of this growth.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Consent documentation

Date

Mr. and Mrs.
Address

Dear Mr. and Mrs.

As you may recall, I recently placed a notice in the school's newsletter, 'The Messenger', explaining that I am currently studying for a postgraduate degree, a Doctorate in Education. As part of my course, I am undertaking a research project which will involve asking a wide range of pupils from different year groups and teaching groups to share their feelings and experiences on learning and behaviour within the school environment.

I would like to ask your permission to invite your son, <Name>, to contribute to my research project, which could involve, for example, keeping a journal or providing an account of his experiences in writing or pictures. I would then ask him to talk to me and share his thoughts after completing his chosen activity. He may then be asked if he would like to take part in interviews with other pupils, looking at the issues of learning and behaviour within the school setting.

If <Name> does not wish to take part in this research study, I will, of course, respect his wishes, as his participation would be entirely voluntary. Furthermore, he is free to withdraw from the study at any stage. Any information collected will be held securely and kept in the strictest confidence. Any contributions will remain anonymous and, therefore, will not be identifiable as belonging to any of the pupils involved in the project.

A report on the findings of the research project will be made available to the school, any pupils participating in the study and their parents/carers.

Please complete and return the attached permission slip, indicating whether you are happy for me to invite <Name> to take part in the research project and return it by <Date>.

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your help and support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

L E Fripps
Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion)

To Mrs. Fripps,

I do/do not give my permission for you to invite <Name> to take part in your research project. I understand that if he does not wish to take part, no further action will be taken and that he is free to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

31st March 2008

Dear [name of pupil],

You may have read my recent notice in 'The Messenger' explaining that I am studying for a postgraduate degree, a Doctorate in Education. As part of my course, I am doing a research project which will involve asking pupils from different year groups and teaching groups to share their feelings and experiences on learning and behaviour within the school.

I would like to ask you to think about taking part in my research project, which might include, amongst other things, keeping a journal/diary, or telling me about your experiences in writing or pictures and then sharing your views after completing the activity you choose to do. You may be invited to take part in interviews with other pupils exploring the topics of learning and behaviour within the school.

If you do not want to take part in this research, I will, of course, respect your wishes, because taking part is entirely voluntary. Also, you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Any information you share during the research project will be held securely and kept in the strictest confidence. When the research is completed, a report on the results will be made available to any pupils participating in the study and their parents/carers, as well as the school; **however, no names will be used and, therefore, no one will be able to identify the pupils who have contributed to the report in any way.**

Please think about taking part in the research project and then complete and return the attached reply slip by **Friday 4th April 2008.**

If you would like to know more about the project, please feel free to talk to me.

Thank you.

Mrs. L. Frippe

Reply Slip

Name:

Please tick one box and return it to me by **Friday 4th April 2008**

YES – I would like to take part in the research project

☐

NO – I do not want to take part in the research project

☐

I would like to have a chat with you before I decide

☐

25th April 2008

Dear [name of pupil],

I am writing to invite you attend a meeting so that I can explain a bit more about my research project and to give you the chance to ask any questions you may have.

I have invited other KS3 students to attend this meeting, which will be held in SU2 (opposite FR2) Period 4 today.

If you would prefer to meet with me on your own, in order to find out more about the research project, just let me know and we will arrange a time to meet that suits us both.

If you are happy to meet as part of a group, I will see you later today!

Thank you.

Mrs. L. Fripps

25th April 2008

Dear [name of pupil],

I am writing to invite you attend a meeting so that I can explain a bit more about my research project and to give you the chance to ask any questions you may have.

I have invited other KS4 students to attend this meeting, which will be held in SU2 (opposite FR2) Period 5 today.

If you would prefer to meet with me on your own, in order to find out more about the research project, just let me know and we will arrange a time to meet that suits us both.

If you are happy to meet as part of a group, I will see you later today!

Thank you.

Mrs. L. Fripps

From: CCN on behalf of LFS
Sent: 15 July 2008 10:16
To: STC Exchange Staff
Subject: Research project
Attachments: Pupil Questionnaire 20 6 08.doc; Note for staff with pupil's questionnaire.doc

Dear Colleagues

Please find attached a copy of a questionnaire and covering letter I have placed in everyone's pigeonhole. If you would like to take part in the research, this can be done either by completing the questionnaire as a hard copy and returning it to my pigeonhole or, if you prefer, by completing the attached copy of the questionnaire and returning it to me by email.

If I haven't given you a hard copy of the survey and you would like it in this format, just let me know!

Many thanks for your help.

Linda

14th July 2008

Dear colleague

You may be aware that I am currently studying for a postgraduate degree, a Doctorate in Education. As part of my course, I am doing a research project which involves asking pupils from different year groups and teaching groups, and staff to share their feelings and experiences on learning and behaviour within the school.

As a result of participating in the project, a Year 11 pupil has devised the attached questionnaire and would like to invite you to complete this survey in order to gather the views of staff, as well as pupils.

If you would like to take part in the research project, please complete and return the attached questionnaire to my pigeonhole by **Friday 18th July 2008**. In case you would prefer to complete the questionnaire electronically, I have also sent it to all staff by email.

Any information shared during the research project will be held securely and kept in the strictest confidence. When the research is completed, a summary of the findings of the project will be available to anyone who has participated in the study. **However, no names will be used and, therefore, no one will be able to identify the participants who have contributed to the report in any way.**

If you would like to know more about the project, please feel free to talk to me.

Thank you.

Linda Fripps

From: LFS
Sent: 07 October 2008 17:06
To: All Staff
Subject: Research Project

Dear colleague,

As you may be aware, I am studying for a Doctorate in Education and would very much like to interview colleagues and hear their views on pupils' behaviour and inclusion.

If you would be happy to take part in this stage of the research, please let me know as soon as possible.

Any information shared during the research project will be held securely and kept in the strictest confidence. When the research is completed, a summary of the findings of the project will be available to anyone who has participated in the study. **However, no names will be used and, therefore, no one will be able to identify the participants who have contributed to the report in any way.**

Thank you

Linda

Appendix 2

Research Methods Proforma

Research Methods

Name:

Method	Yes	No	Not sure – would like to know more
Journal/diary (written/spoken)			
Reflection (written/spoken)			
Email			
Shadowing (classroom observations)			
Photographs			
Drawings			
School maps			
Talking tour			
Spider diagrams/mind maps			
Drama (role plays/improvisations)			
Music			
Discussion groups			
Interviews			

Can you think of any other ways participants could share their ideas?

Any questions or comments?

Appendix 3

Questionnaire devised by pupil

Thoughts on Behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving'. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please give your reasons why.

Thank you for your help with this questionnaire

Appendix 4

Interview schedule devised by pupil

Interview Schedule

1. Why do you think bad behaviour in class keeps on occurring?
2. Is the class a place for children to relax or to get an education and be someone in life? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Why is it important to not get drawn into bad behaviour?
4. What type of bad behaviour in class is happening?
5. What do you want to do as a pupil to stop this from happening?
6. If there were ways to stop this bad behaviour would you be pleased? Give reasons for your answer.

Appendix 5

Documentary Analysis – Scrutiny Schedule

Documentary Analysis – Scrutiny Schedule

Title of Document:

Originator:

Purpose:

Circumstances of derivation:

Date:

Revisions:

Accessible Format? YES



NO

Extracts from document	Notes on content	Comments/Interpretations

Appendix 6

Sample of raw data illustrating coding process

Thoughts on Behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

I think
Students are misbehaving because
they either don't like the teacher
that is teaching them or they want
to misbehave to act proud thinking
being bad is a good thing. Some
Misbehave if ~~there~~ there is a
different teacher teaching them.

Relationships

Blame-pupils

Relationships

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

I think Students should be taken
out of lessons for ~~at~~ at least
2 days to learn their ~~less~~
lesson.

othering
exclusion

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving'. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please give your reasons why.

I Agree and Disagree teaching
know when a child is achieving
and not achieving if the
child is not achieving then
the teacher should ~~leave~~
rest and concentrate on the one
that are achieving.

othering
exclusion

Thank you for your help with this questionnaire

Thoughts on Behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

To act big and get known and get Reputation around the School

Blame-pupils

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

Stricter teachers Kick bad Students out the school.

Blame-teachers
othering/
exclusion

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving'. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please give your reasons why.

I agree, the teachers shouldn't teach the bad Students if they are misbehaving & have no respect.

othering/
exclusion

Thank you for your help with this questionnaire

Thoughts on Behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

I think students misbehave because they think it is funny, they like to show off in front of their friends it is all attention seeking.

Sometimes I believe it is because they are bored, but also I don't think they respect their teachers peers.

Blame - Pupils

attention

boredom

Blame - Pupils

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

If detention is not working then they should be permanently excluded from school, why should the students willing to learn have to put up with the disruption, find out what they think should happen to them.

othering/exclusion

A separate unit within the school is not a deterrent as they appear to want to get in it because they get more attention and better treatment i.e. first in for lunch, taken on trips this is supposed to be a reward.

attention

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving'. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please give your reasons why.

I disagree because the pupils not achieving make it very difficult for the teacher to actually teach the class due to the poorly behaved disrupting all of the time, I'm not saying all poor achievers are disruptive but I have to say the majority are, they will not allow the others to work in a quiet, sensible way, you cannot concentrate when pupils are shouting out etc in lessons.

othering/exclusion

Thank you for your help with this questionnaire

Thoughts on Behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

1. Their parents haven't taught them how to behave, probably because the parents don't know how to behave either. Too many teenage parents.
2. Children who have been poorly (not only in the monetary sense) brought up, constantly seek attention. Misbehaving is a way of gaining attention - children who misbehave do not perceive guilt or shame therefore any kind of attention is good. They also gain credibility with their fellow pupils. 'He's brave' saying that to the teacher or 'he's funny'. The class start laughing - it's like being on the stage. The 'buzz' of an audience.

Blame - Parents

Blame - Parents

Attention

Blame - Pupils

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

More shaming and belittling in front of the class. When pupil shows off - stop the class. Put him up in the front (calmly) 'Billy's in charge - he obviously knows far more than anyone with a degree in education. Let's all listen and see what he has to say on the subject of relativity (or whatever). Tell us all you know - exactly you know nothing. Teenagers hate sarcasm. If more boys were made fools of in front of their peers I think they would start thinking twice about being stupid. When you turn back to your own teachers it was always the sarcastic ones that were the ones that you learnt the most in their lessons.

othering/exclusion

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving'. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please give your reasons why.

Categorically DISAGREE.

Teachers particularly in this school are constantly distracted by the misbehaving boys and it is a miracle that any boys come through with any qualifications. If I was a nice, kind hardworking boy starting in this school I would probably feel like killing myself by the end of year 7.

othering/exclusion

Thank you for your help with this questionnaire

Thoughts on Behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

Peer groups.

Blame - pupils

Work set too difficult or not explained clearly

Blame - teachers

knowing teacher will let them 'redeem' themselves.

Blame - teachers

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

Consistency of rules in lessons

Consistency

Removing pupil/pupils who continuously disrupt from lessons

othering/exclusion

Senior staff looking in on lessons more regularly

Blame - SMT

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving'. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please give your reasons why.

Disagree - Most teachers want their pupils to achieve and usually support those who are struggling. Some attention is given to both if pupil is trying.

Blame - teachers

however, negative/unwilling to work attitude can be met with negative attitude to pupil - sent out of room etc to enable rest of class

othering/exclusion

Thank you for your help with this questionnaire to learn.

Thoughts on Behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

Lack of discipline from teachers and children no that they can get away with it.

Blame-
teachers

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

I'm not sure what can be done. May-be a bit more interaction with parents and teachers. Working together. and children who don't want to learn. expell them.. but then were would you put them. It's very hard.

Relation-
ships

othering/
exclusion

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving'. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please give your reasons why.

I agree that there are so many children who are bright and intelligent but they don't get recognized, or just told to get on with it. The children who are a pain get the attention and disrupt the children who want to learn

attention

attention
othering/
exclusion

Thank you for your help with this questionnaire

Lesson 3-

Teacher
accountable
for
pupils'
behaviour
and
completion
of
work

(Blame
in
sense
of
accountability)

As usual in Mr. lesson everyone was at their very best behaviour.

I think this is because all about how he represents himself.

We know Mr. is a good teacher but strict and he makes this very clear. I think this why we behave in his lesson.

All work by everyone was completed.

Lesson 4 -

Blame
pupils

Now this lesson was the worst of day we had books being thrown and all sorts and boys fighting.

This had Nothing! to do

with teacher. Its because people don't give him a chance to speak.

I personally feel he is a very good teacher.

Relationships

- Once again respect issue.

Blame-
teacher

Relationships

I heard one boy say "hes a rubbish teacher" you can see theres no respect.

LESSON 3 + 4 Had double .

I.C.T

Same as other lesson's just revising and catching up on
corsework etc. everything was going fine but then Mr.
came into the room eith his group was nothing to do with
my class. Comes in and without even doing anything try's to
make me leave school and go home all the way to
and get my shoes and come back and fair enough I was
wearing trainers and have been told about it before; there a
plain black pear trainer's nothing on them just plain plain
black but he carn't have this no, he doesn't teach me he never
has, he isn't my form tutor and no over teacher worries about
them, and I could go around the school and pick atleast 50
kids out wearing them and he wants to make my life difficult
1day before I sit extremely important exams. He obviously has
issues with me and has to be petty just to moan at me. It's
teacher's like him that makes me play up and have attitudes
towards other's because there was no need for him to come up
to me today and give his order's about trainers and sending me
home, all I wanted to do is get on with my corsework in peace,
I don't know why he wants to make such a deal out of it.
Stressed me outttt teachers like that, the way that teacher's
would get along without all this would be to not moan and
moan about petty little things like a pear of trainers and worry
about teaching. At the end of day what does he wear ??
Shorts (in the middle of winter) bright red trainers and a dirty
coffe stained jumper.

Blame-
teachers

Consistency

Relation-
ships

Consistency

Blame-
Teachers

Emotions/
feeling

Consistency

...

Extract from KS3 Focus Group

Pupil P: that's like Mr. X [name of Form Tutor], cos sometimes I walk into form and if I'm like 20 seconds late I'll, I'll get sent, and this is a true story, and I went in like 20 seconds detention and he kept me till 4 o'clock and then J comes in like 21 seconds and he never got nothing. He went 'J please go and sit down, P stand over there' and then I'd be rude and he gives me a detention. And he goes, and then he'll take away the four hour and he go to Mr. Y [name of Year Learning Coordinator] with me and he'll say 'but P was back chatting' but, but then Mr. Y won't listen either because he won't say like 'why, why was he back chatting' cos 'that's why I was back chatting because you've let him sit down and you ain't letting me sit down and that's out of order'

consistency

LF: why is it out of order?

Pupil P: He'd be like 'P it's not because of that, it's because of the back chat' I was like 'No, because you've given me a 4 o'clock detention' 'No, I wasn't P, that was nothing of the sort' and it was just like 'Why are you lying?' and sometimes I just want to turn round and knock him out

consistency

emotions/
feelings

LF: but why did you feel it was it out of order?

Pupil M: he does pick on P though Miss. Like in class and stuff

Blame -
Teachers

Pupil P: all the time, he does dun he.

Blame - Teachers

LF: OK. I'll come to that in a sec M. That's an important point.

MC: thank you

LF: why, you were saying he was out of order, what was the problem about J coming in?

Pupil P: cos he was like later than me and he goes to sit down, and then Mr. X was like 'yeah but P you, but P you've got excessive lateness'. Yeah I might have excessive lateness but overall we're about the same so like 'Why' and sometimes I just wanna turn round and hit him, but I can't.

consistency

emotions/
feelings

Pupil A: but if teachers got

LF: OK can I just go to M because M

Pupil P: [interrupts] but I'd love to

emotions/feelings

LF: was just making a point there. Carry on, cos remember this is between ourselves Ok so we've got to respect each other and keep everything confidential. Go on M.

Pupil M: A lot of the time though Mr. X does just make P stand at the front and like sort of picks on him every possible way.

Blame-Teachers

Pupil P: If there's a question yeah and someone's got to go up and write something on the whiteboard, who will it be M?

Pupil M: [snorts] and as soon as P says something to defend himself, sir comes back with something else

Pupil P A: yeah

Pupil M: one lesson they were arguing for 20 minutes, we [laughs] hardly got any work done.

Pupil P: 20 minutes I was arguing. I think I won in the end though cos I run off.

Pupil M: cos you didn't say nothing. Like you know that time you were saying you were late though, I think that was the day J did get hit by the car though.

Pupil P: yeah, but that's no excuse, cos he got run over.

[laughter]

Extract from TA Focus Group

TA1: no respect, no author..., we're not allowed to give out anything, and the kids know we're not allowed to give a detention so they will speak to us worse than they do to any of the teachers, it's disrespect, they swear at us and they blank us, they walk past you

Blame -

SLT

Blame -
Pupils

Relationships

TA2: and it's like the one way system, one way system on the stairs, if you tell them can you go the other way, it's a one way system they don't listen they just keep going

TA1: No. But it should be throughout the school, any adult or member of staff in this school if a kid's walking down the corridor and you say sort your tie out or put your shoes on that they listen to you and if they don't then they get the same sanction as if an SLT would have told them. [Several overlaps of agreement] as a TA or even as [name] the caretaker because at the end of the day we're all trying to make everyone else's jobs easier and the kids know that there are some members of staff in this school that they can get away with murder and nothing's going to happen to them because SLT or Head of Years haven't got the time to chase up silly things

Consistency

Blame -

Teachers

Blame

SLT

Consistency

TA2: It's even when us as TAs go to someone who's in senior management, they don't have any, what's the word not respect, but they're really not that bothered with what we have to

Blame -

SLT

TA1: [interrupts] Can't be bothered ... we're just a TA

Blame -

TA2: say, we're just complaining, or it's just brushed off really, it's not important

SLT

TA3: We're known as grasses, let's face it they call us grasses

Relationships

TA1: Snitch, snitch is the word

TA3: Grasses, snitch, we're telling tales because we should be agreeing with the boys not agreeing with the teacher

Relationships

Extract from 1-1 Staff Interview (member of teaching staff)

I think there are different forms of challenging behaviour, and some of those could be as trivial as the temperamental nature of a boy on that particular day, but there may be much more deep seated things as well which form part of a behavioural pattern which is consistent with that pupil in his behaviour across the curriculum areas. So the way in which we deal with those boys, who are persistent and problematic pupils is through a series of sanctions, without going into the detail of what each of those is, but a series of sanctions which become progressively more punitive as they go on, with ultimately exclusion-fixed term exclusion and possibly if it is so extreme then permanent exclusion. As to whether these are effective I think a lot of it depends on the teacher, I think pupils, as it has always been, will respond to one teacher where they won't respond to another. So that one teacher can coax them through a joke and get them on a good side and another teacher tries to do that and they won't. One teacher might just put their hand on a shoulder, and to one particular pupil that's fine, another pupil might rail against that and feel that that's an insult and whatever. So I think knowing your pupils is hugely important, and while you want to establish a norm, I think you do appreciate as a teacher that your norm, like rules are there to be shifted where it's appropriate, and you've got to establish there are some things beyond which you will not be flexible because that's a matter of principle and I think what we're doing as teachers and within school is to teach, perhaps not overtly, but in the process of what we do in terms of us being consistent ourselves in what we accept and challenge, we are showing them that there are principles in the way they

Blame -
Pupils

othering/
exclusion

Blame -
Teachers -
Accountability

Relationships

consistency

behave in the way we respond and that through life in society there are certain things that are never acceptable and some things can be discarded.

consistency

I think teachers who are unprepared, who don't understand children, who cannot have a sense of humour, can't banter with children, and can't set the dividing mark between the joke and serious work are the ones who frequently have the most difficulties. Those teachers who perhaps want to lord it over the pupils because they're intelligent, more intelligent or they think they are or whatever, and perhaps have their own problems, brought in through childhood themselves who perhaps shouldn't be teaching and I think that sometimes they exacerbate the situations, they don't actually help the problem, they are part of the problem. So I think there are a whole range of things that cause a problem in a class and it could be something beyond your control because it's something between two pupils that has happened prior to your lesson. So a teacher's inability to control and determine the direction of their lesson can often impact on the subsequent teacher's lessons. So I don't think you're always in control of the situation.

Blame -
Teachers

Blame -
Pupils

Blame -
Teachers

Appendix 7

Co-researchers' summary of findings from pupil questionnaires

Thoughts on behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

Whilst reading through the questionnaires on 'thoughts on behaviour' we found many different themes on why students misbehave.

The main themes that we found were: boring/distracted, to be popular/peer pressure/"big", wrong groups/bullying and to gain attention.

We also found some minor themes that didn't come up as often. They were: to take advantage of the teachers/teachers not strict enough, not caring/certain subjects misbehave in, issues at home/little or no support from parents/no guidance/the teachers avoid them, and influence from video games/18+/other bad influences i.e. happy slapping.

By looking at the themes for question one, we found that students can misbehave mainly because of boredom or being distracted. In one example someone has said "they misbehave because they are bored." Boredom is the main theme that makes students misbehave. Another student thinks that the reason students misbehave is because "teachers are too big-headed and egotistical" and that their "attitude towards us is horrible."

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

After reading question 1, we read question 2 and we found that many of the major themes were solutions to the reasons why students misbehaved in question 1.

Some of these major themes were how teachers should treat us/ what they would do, and one that came up quite often was how students should be

punished for their negative actions, i.e. - misbehaving and distracting everyone else.

Some of the other themes that came up, the ones that didn't appear as often, were things like getting parents involved, move students away from friends/ exclude or expel them, find the source of the problem, i.e. why they do it, or what the problem is, and finally, make lessons more interesting so that students don't get bored.

From looking at these themes, as mentioned earlier, the most frequent theme to come up in question two is students should be punished for their misbehaviour, some people gave examples how students who misbehave should be punished, some examples of this are "made to stay after school and write lines" and "stricter punishments and larger detentions". We found that to solve boredom, lessons should be made more interesting.

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving.' Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons why.

By looking at the answers to question three, our analysing found that the themes that came up the most were: teachers focus on the good students/achievers, teachers focus on the misbehavers/un-achievers, people who try but don't get attention, teachers help people who need help, and teachers who don't help people who need the help.

An example given by a student is for teachers that focus on the good students/achievers. This student says "help the kids who want to learn."

In conclusion, we found that the students seem to have more or less the same ideas when it comes to thoughts on behaviour. However, we also found that whilst reading through the questionnaires, we discovered many students answered with very poor English. This could either mean that the students that answered the survey experience difficulty with reading and writing, or the students thought that answering the survey was a waste of time and therefore didn't answer to the best of their ability. This could be as a result of a lack of concentration, which are behaviour issues and an inability to answer a simple survey.

Appendix 8

**Co-researchers' summary of findings from staff
questionnaires**

Thoughts on behaviour

Why do you think students misbehave?

Whilst reading through the questionnaires on '*thoughts on behaviour*', we found out the teachers reasons as to why they think students misbehave.

The main themes that we found were: Boredom from students/laziness, upbringing/home life (parents fault), wanting to look good in front of peers, lack of interest, not understanding work/lack of work and lack of teaching skill/discipline.

We didn't find any minor themes in the teacher's questionnaires as we did in the student's ones. The teachers more or less thought the same thing as each other.

By looking at the themes for question one, we found that students can misbehave mainly because of wanting to look good in front of peers. In one example, a member of staff has said "to prove something to friends" which indicates that even teachers think that the students are influenced by peer pressure.

What action can be taken to stop misbehaviour in school?

After reading question 1, we read question 2 and we found that many of the major themes were solutions to the reasons why students misbehaved in question 1.

Some of the major themes were getting the senior management involved and improving the curriculum and discipline towards students. One that came up quite often was improve the behaviour of the students through discipline such as detentions and different punishments.

Some of the other themes that came up, the ones that didn't come up as often were, segregating the students that were causing problems, getting parents involved, and defining rules and having a no tolerance policy towards misbehaviours.

From looking at these themes, as mentioned earlier, the most frequent theme to come up in question two is to improve discipline, detentions and punishments. An example given is "punishment of poor behaviour needs to be consistent and they need to be sanctioned accordingly." This indicates that teachers think that if students misbehave then the punishment should be followed through.

'Teachers pay more attention to the kids that are achieving than the kids that are not achieving.' Do you agree or disagree with the statement? Give reasons why.

By looking at the answers to question three, our analysing found that the themes that came up the most were: Agreeing with the statement, disagreeing with the statement, people who misbehave/underachieve get attention, people who are good/try hard get attention, people who see both sides and the good achievers miss out.

An example given by one of the members of staff is for the teachers to work with and focus their attention on the students who try hard. "We pay more attention to the pupils who try hard".

Conclusion

In conclusion, we found that the teachers seem to have more or less the same ideas when it comes to thoughts on behaviour; they thought it was the students fault but the problems could be resolved through the teachers.

Appendix 9

Co-researchers' recommendations to SLT

SLT Recommendations

SLT Recommendations from teachers:

Based on our findings we found that teachers would like to improve discipline and have a more effective punishment than detention. The teachers would also like a better contact system with home and would like to see an improved senior management. They would also like an improvement in the curriculum where teachers would like to be able to teach what they want.

The teachers would also like to see rules defined better to the students and the teachers to not tolerate misbehaviours or give out second chances or as one teacher says “three strikes and your out.”

SLT Recommendations from students:

From our findings, we found that the students mainly wanted better treatment from teachers/staff and also want misbehaving pupils to have improved punishments. They also want better contact with home, and they want the students misbehaving to be removed from lessons, or school completely. Students want SLT to talk to the misbehaviours to find what the source of the problem is and why they do it. Some students want more lessons to be interesting.

Our Recommendations to SLT

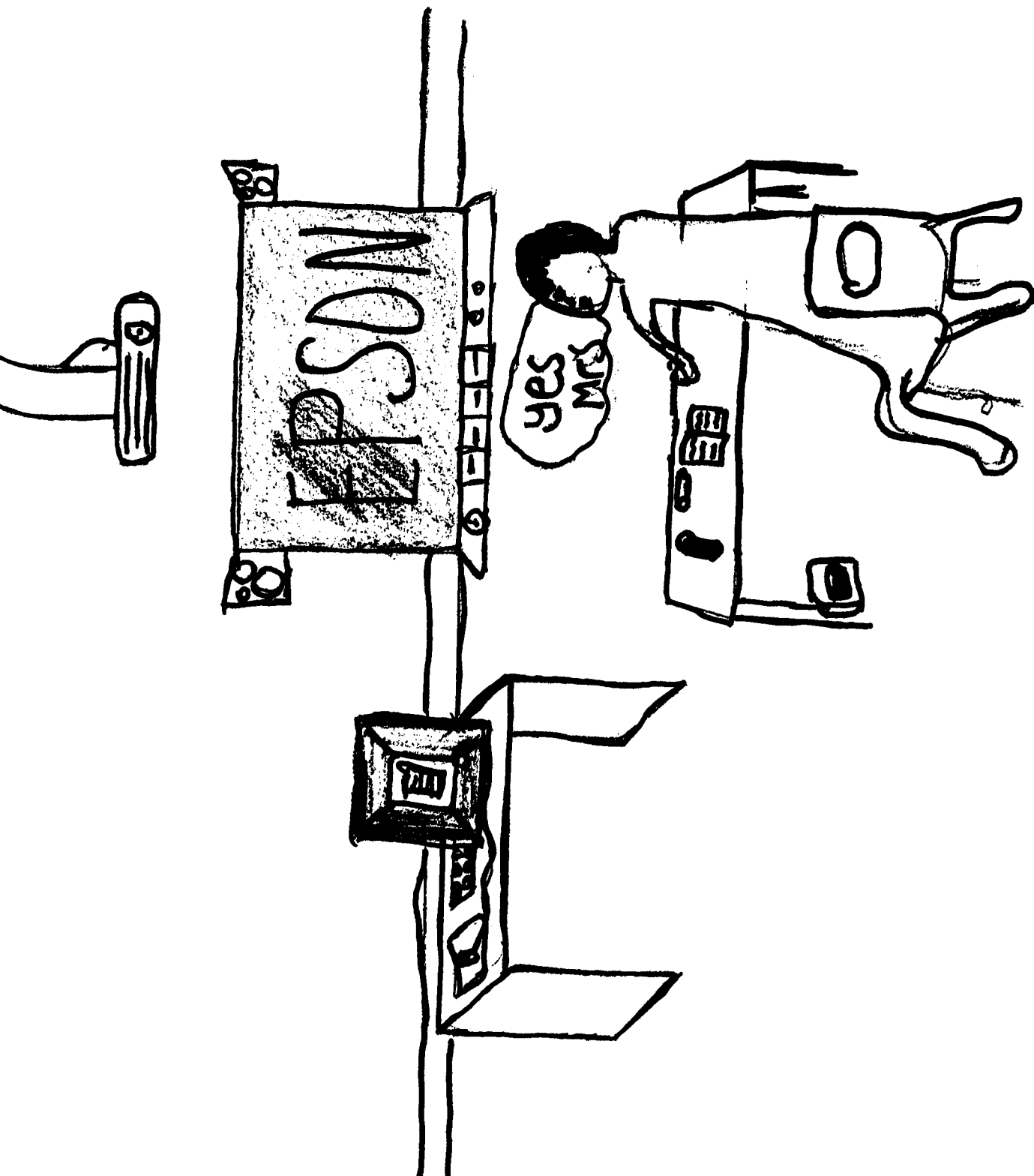
- Improve punishment system to ensure empty threats are not made.
- Improve contact system with home and get parents more involved.
- Improve punishment system:
 - Remove from lesson
 - Exclude internally
 - Exclude permanently

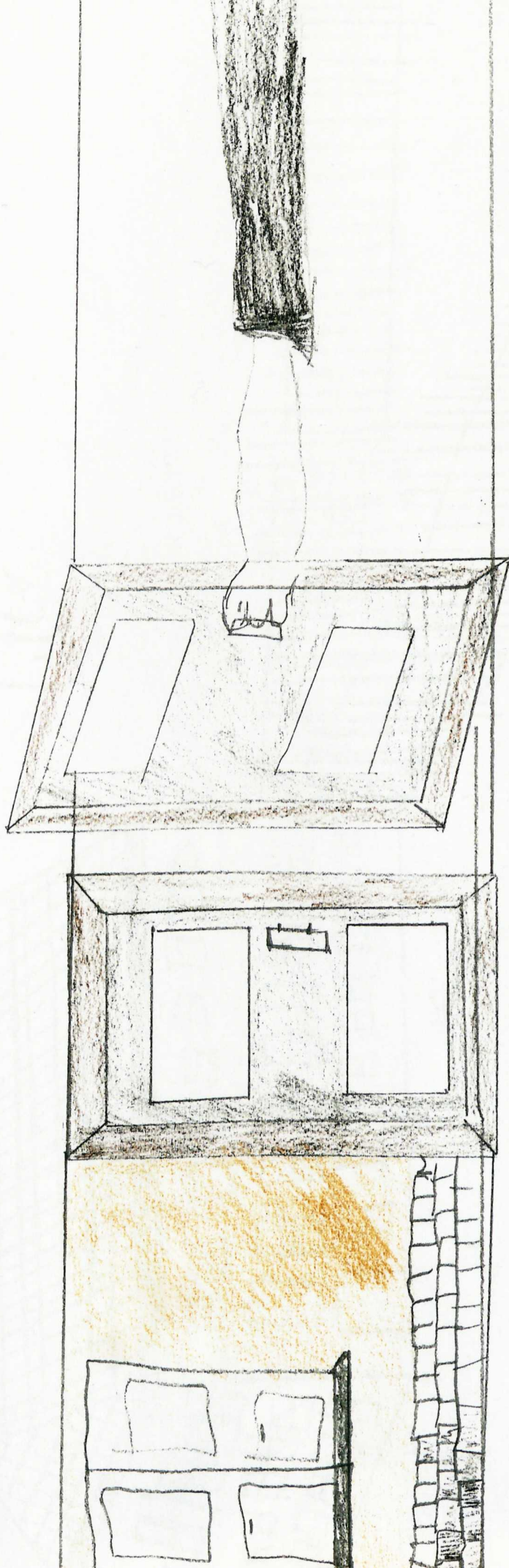
Appendix 10

Drawings from year 9 student

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Pupils Beins
Polite to tean
and Showing
a seat.

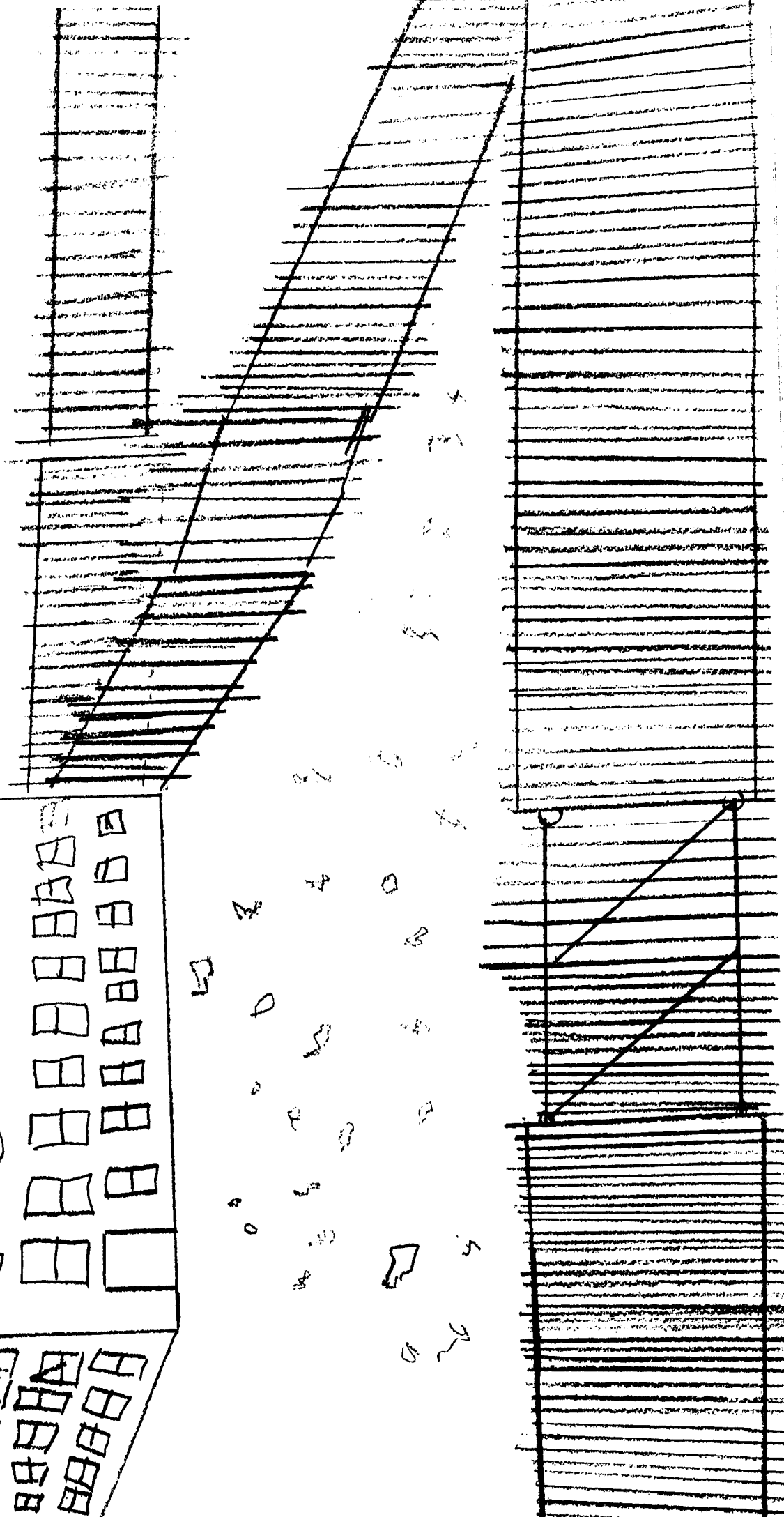
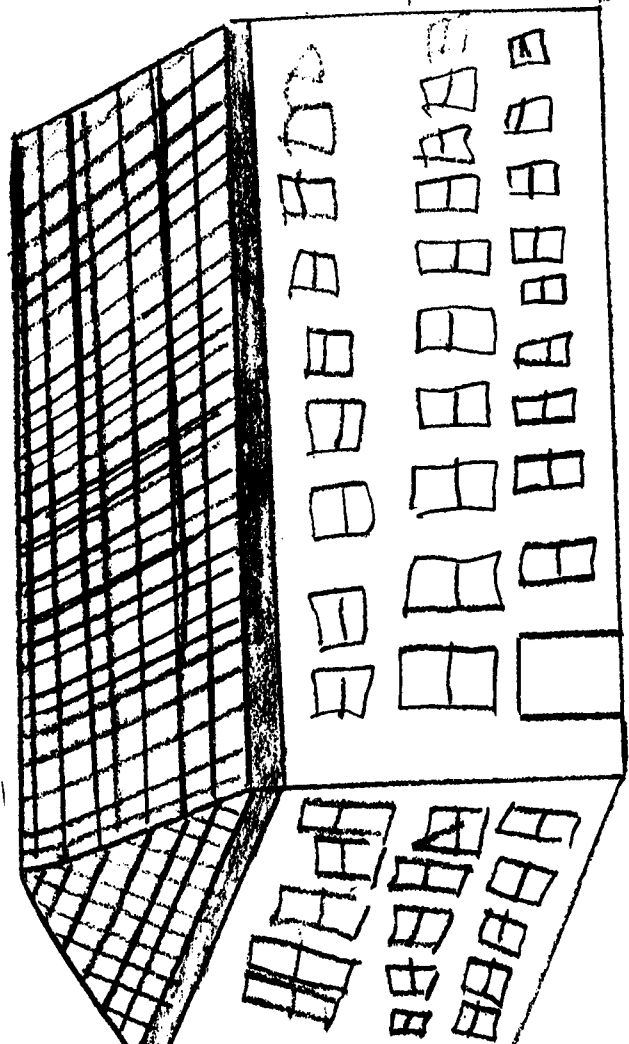




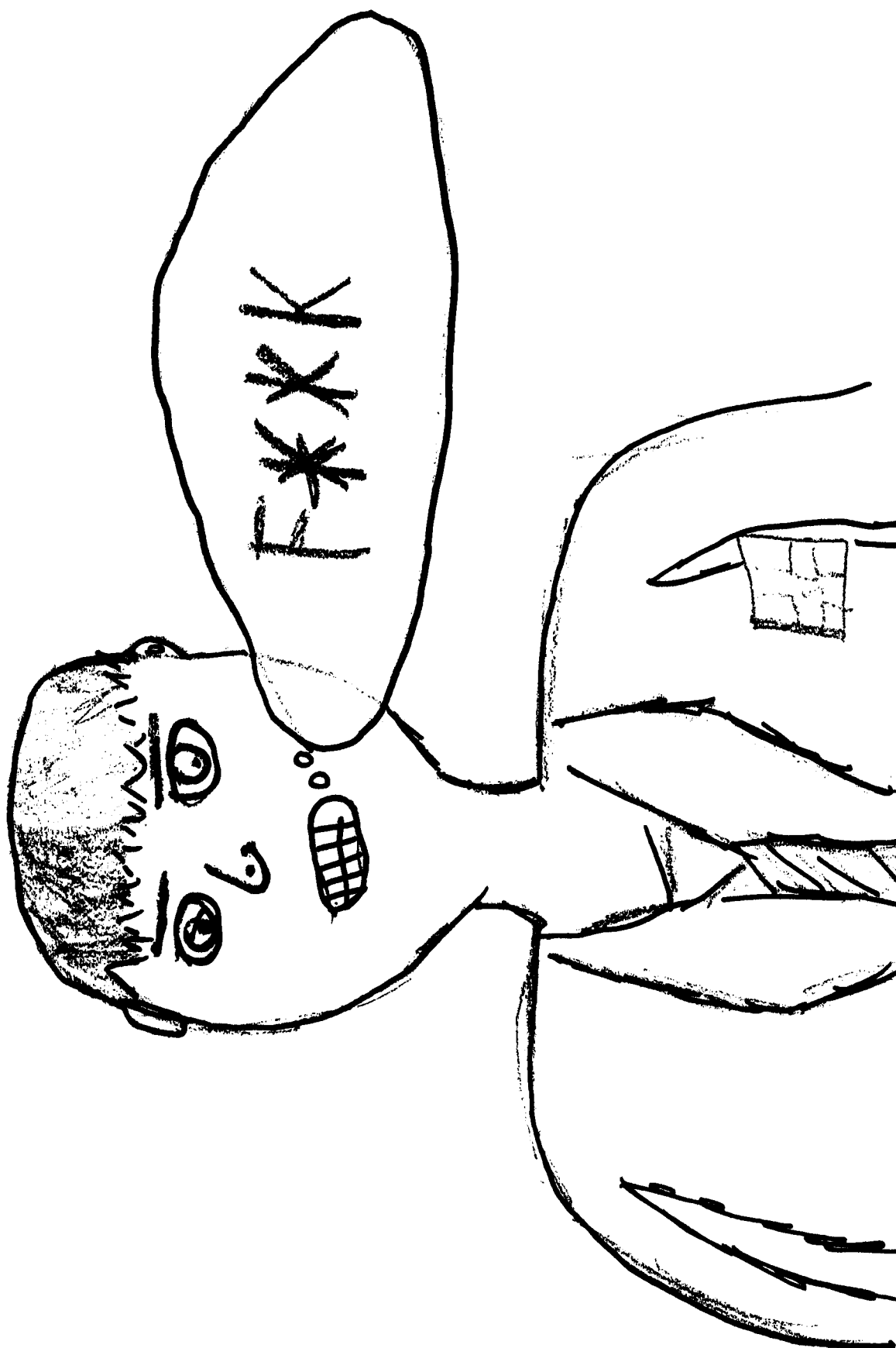
Pupils holding Door Open for teachers and
Other Pupils.

3

177 or

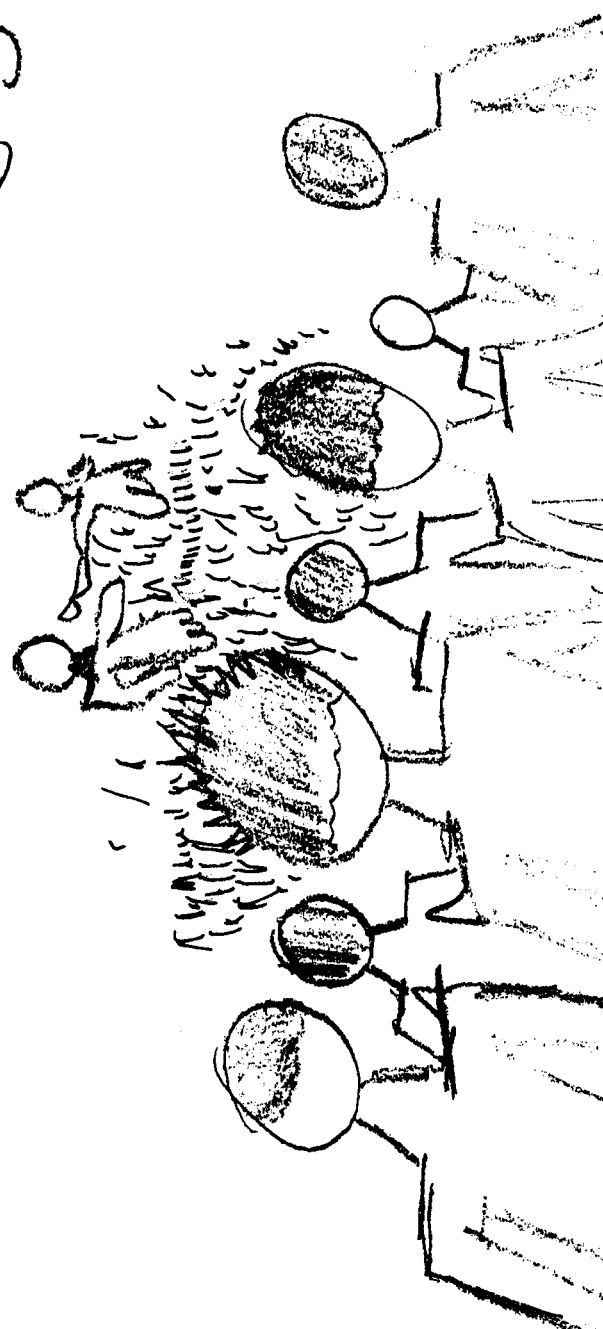


Swearing

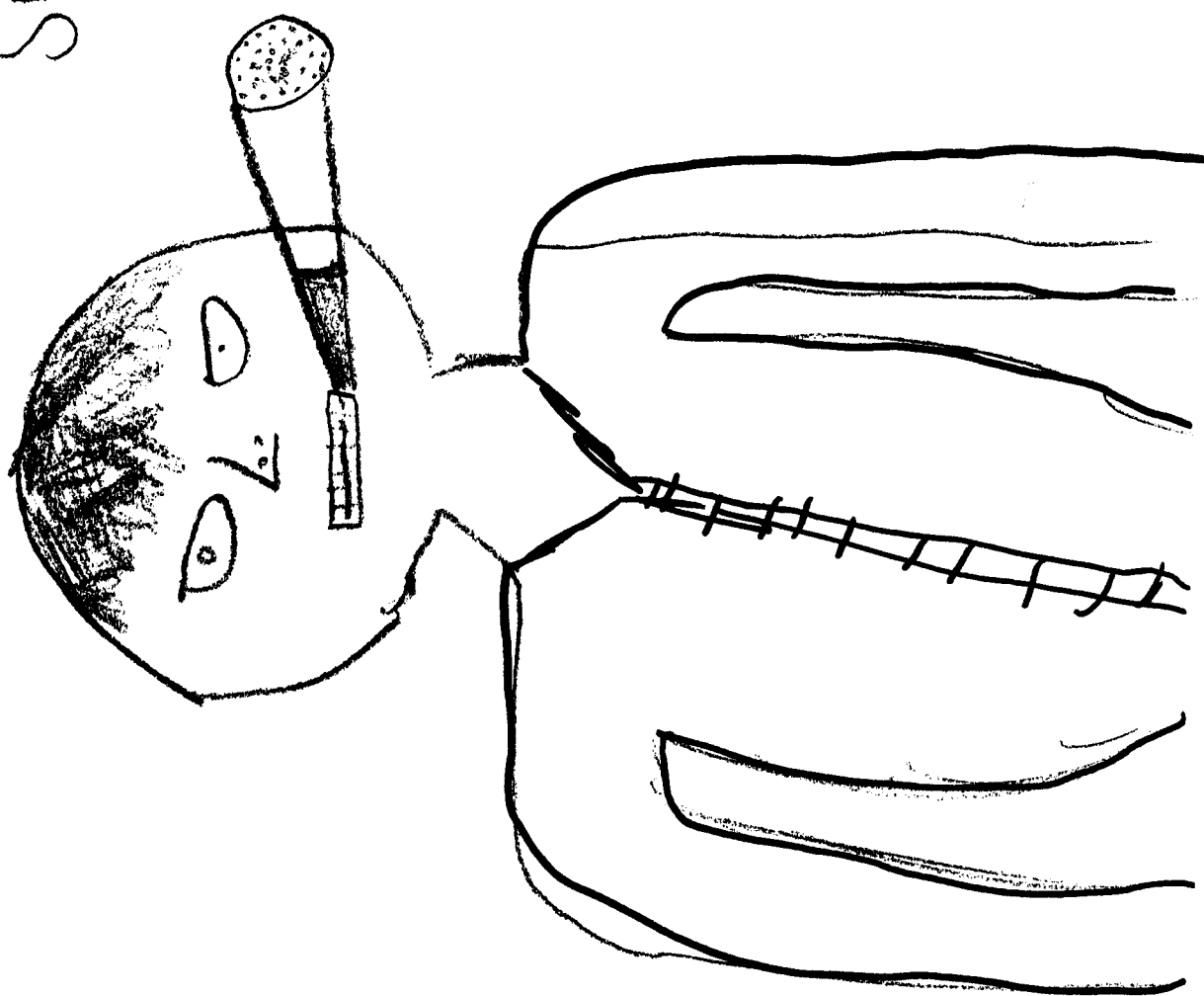


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Fights

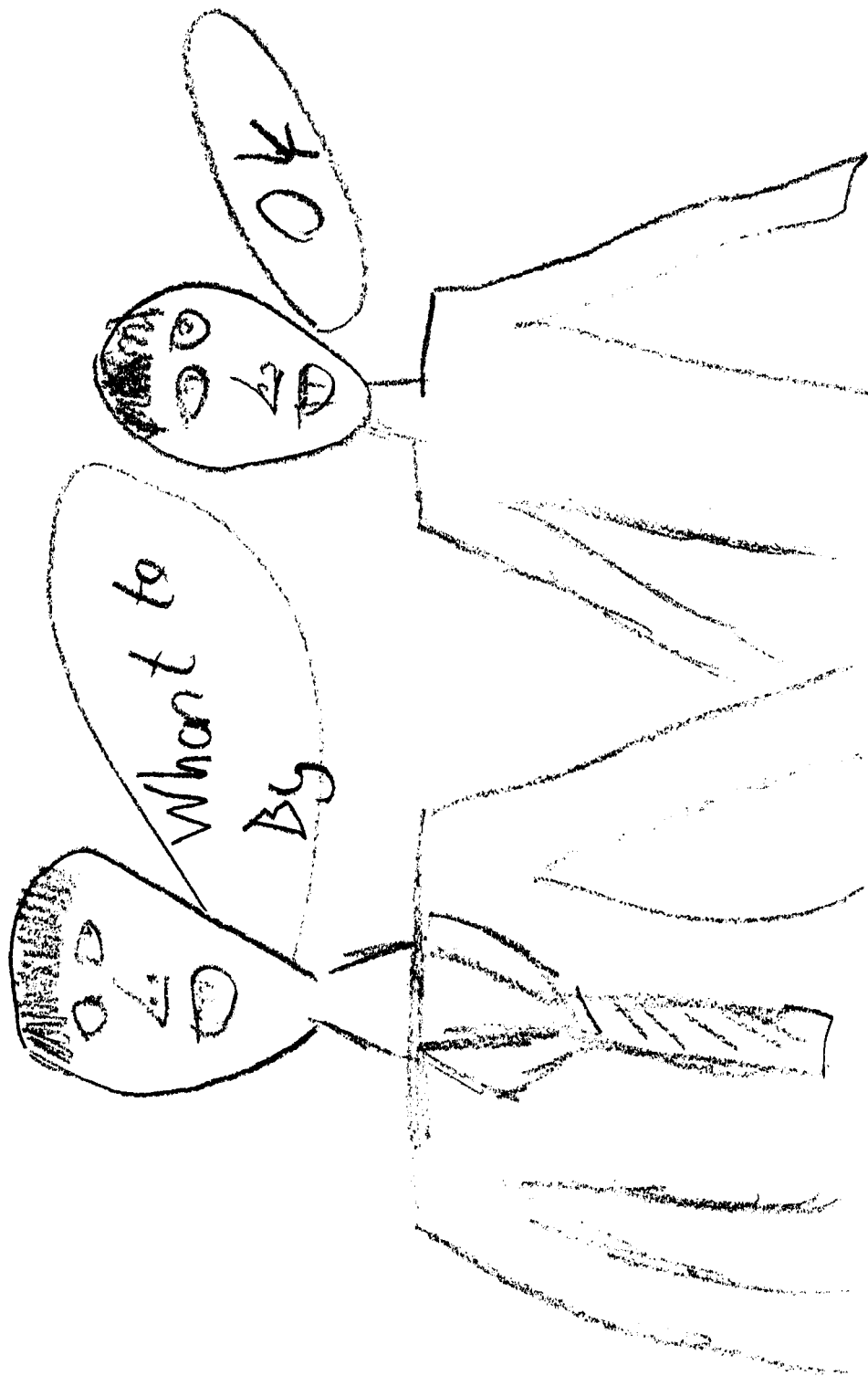


Smoking



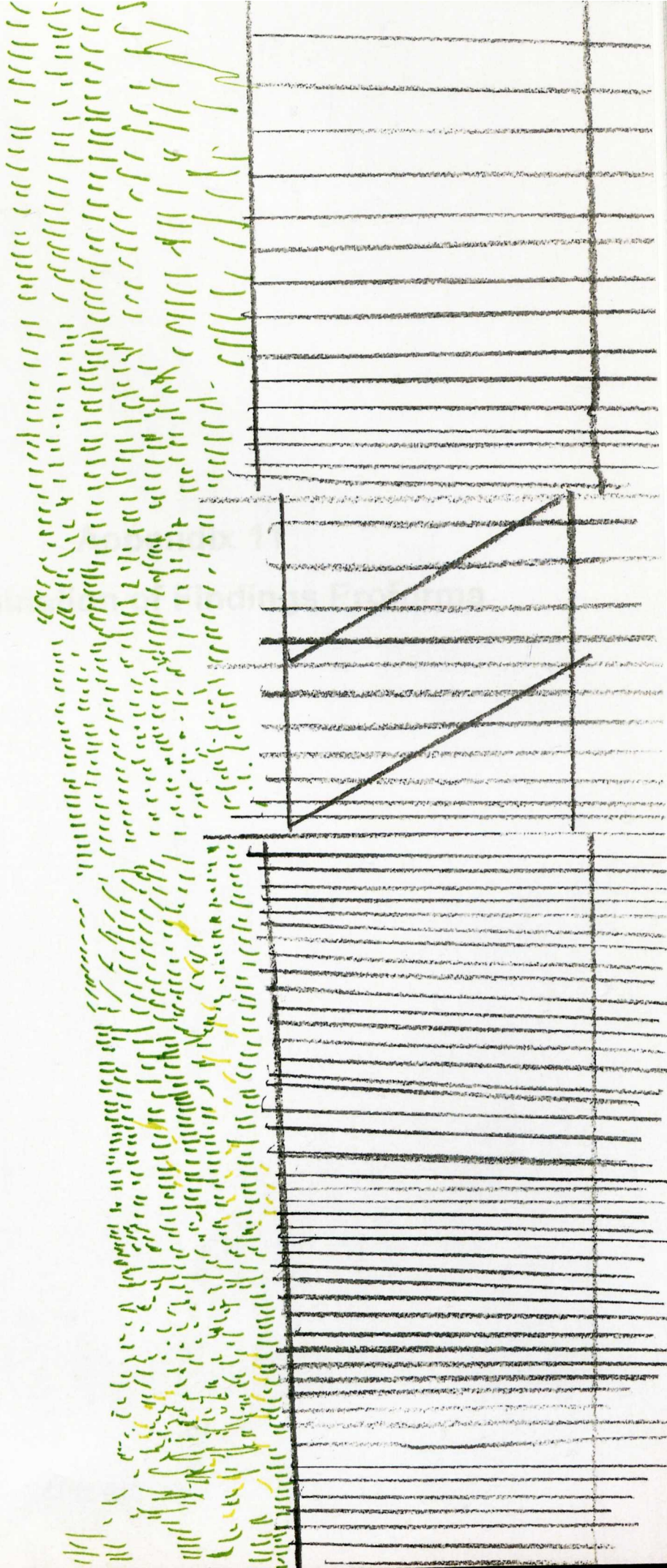
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Appendix 11

Dissemination of Findings Proforma

Perceptions of challenging behaviour and inclusion in a secondary school. How do they relate to the school's policies and practices?

Themes arising from data	Staff	Pupils	Both
Boredom			
Bullying			
Parents/Home			
SLT			
Peers			
Interest/Motivation			
Messing about/Mucking around			
Discipline			
Finding out source of problem			
Attention			
Relationships			
Punishment			
Not understanding work			
Respect			
Laziness			
Exclusion/Inclusion			
Curriculum			
Consistency			
Blame			

Implications for the School's policies and practices:

-

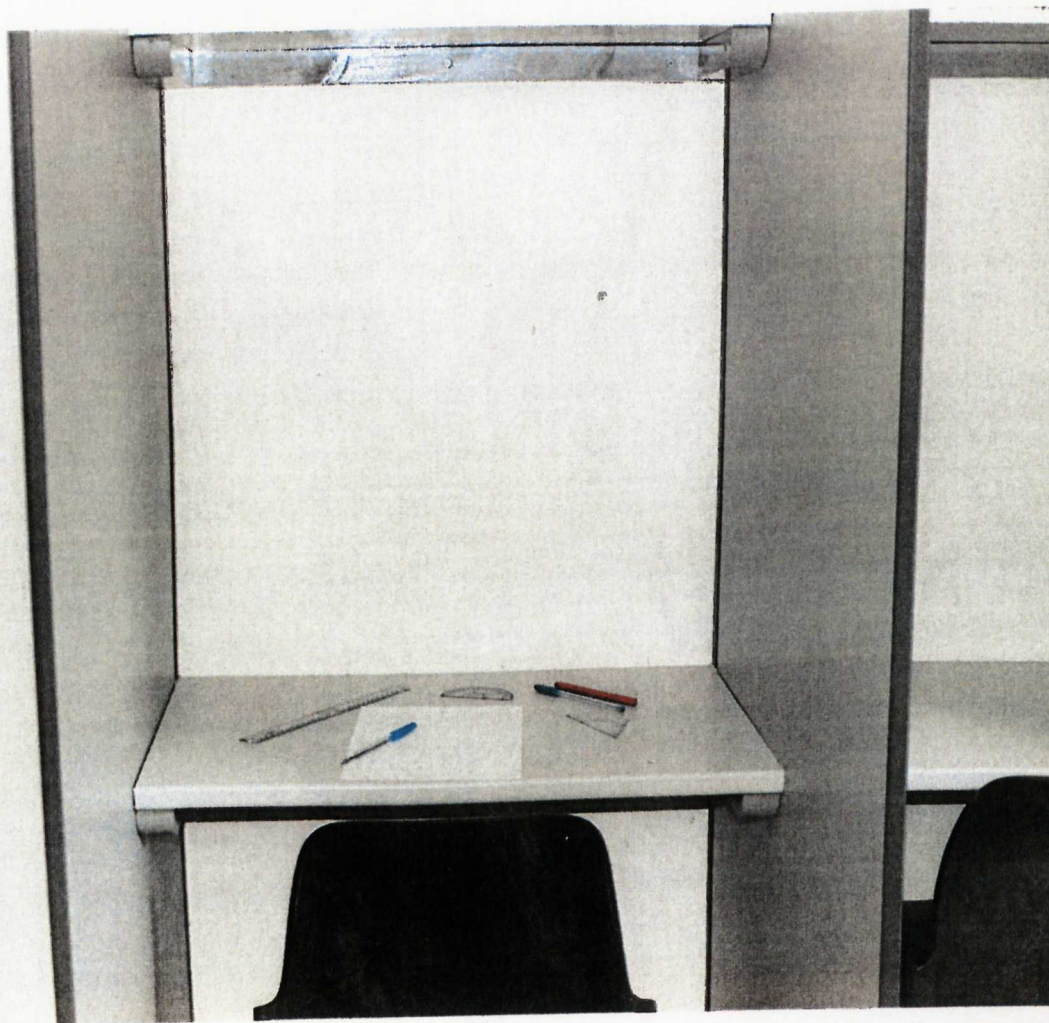
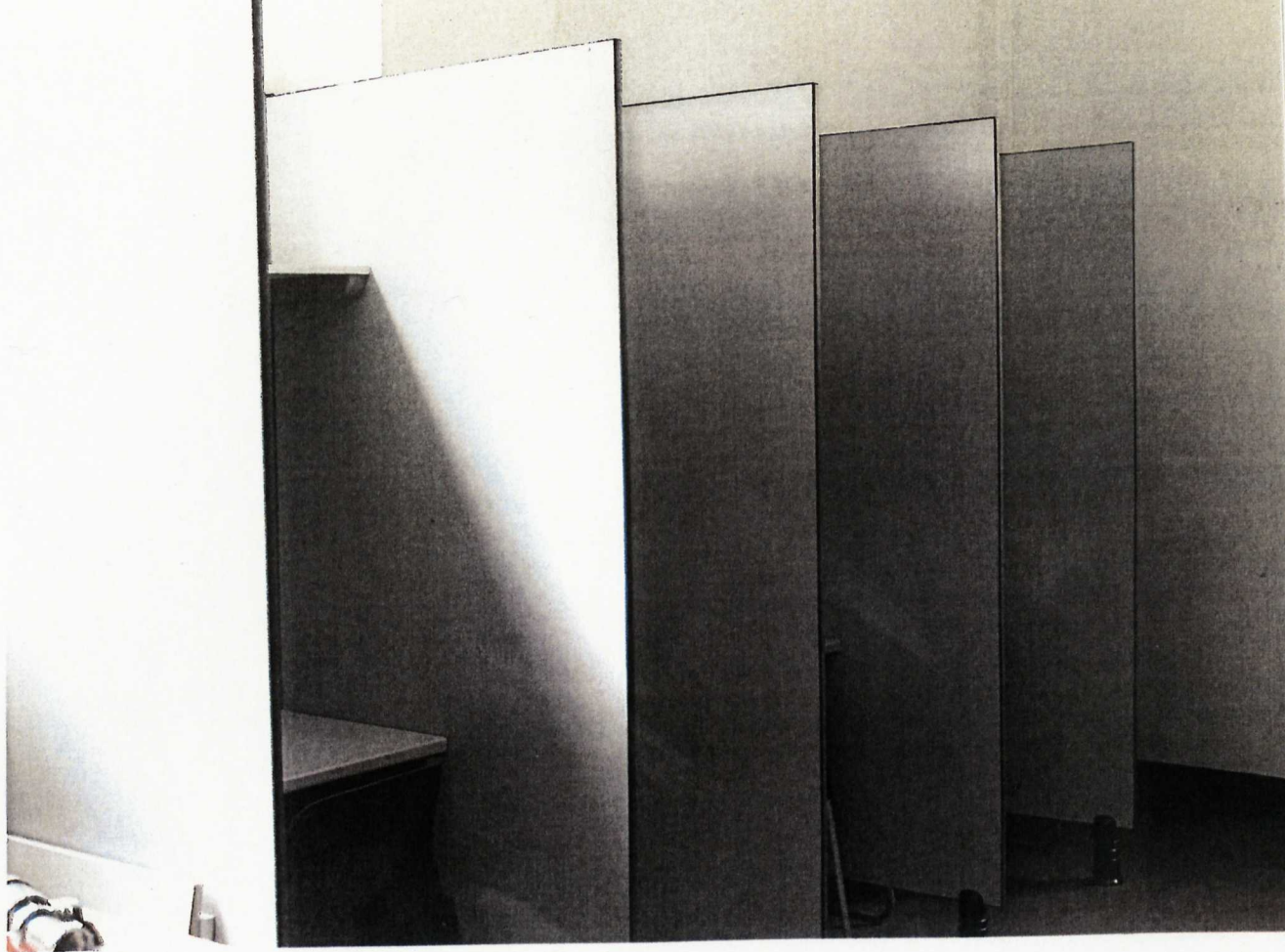
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Appendix 12

Photographs of former and new internal exclusion room

Former internal exclusion room



New internal exclusion room



Appendix 13

**Photographs of bins, water fountains and picnic
tables**



Appendix 14
Photograph of the ‘Cage’



Appendix 15

Reasons for Taking Part in the Research Proforma

REASONS FOR TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Name:

Date:

I have agreed to take part in the research project on learning and behaviour within our school because

Signature: